



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

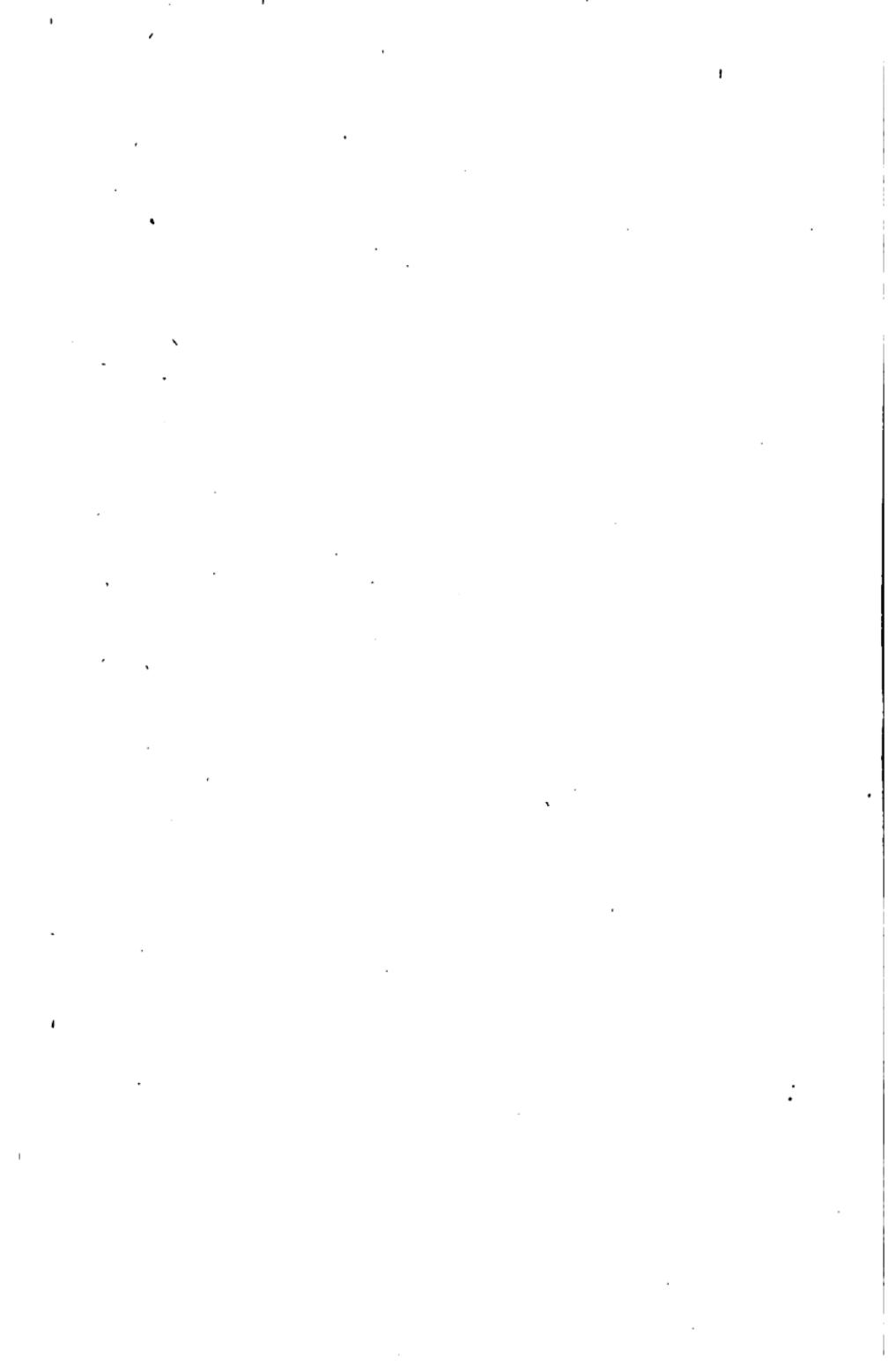
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

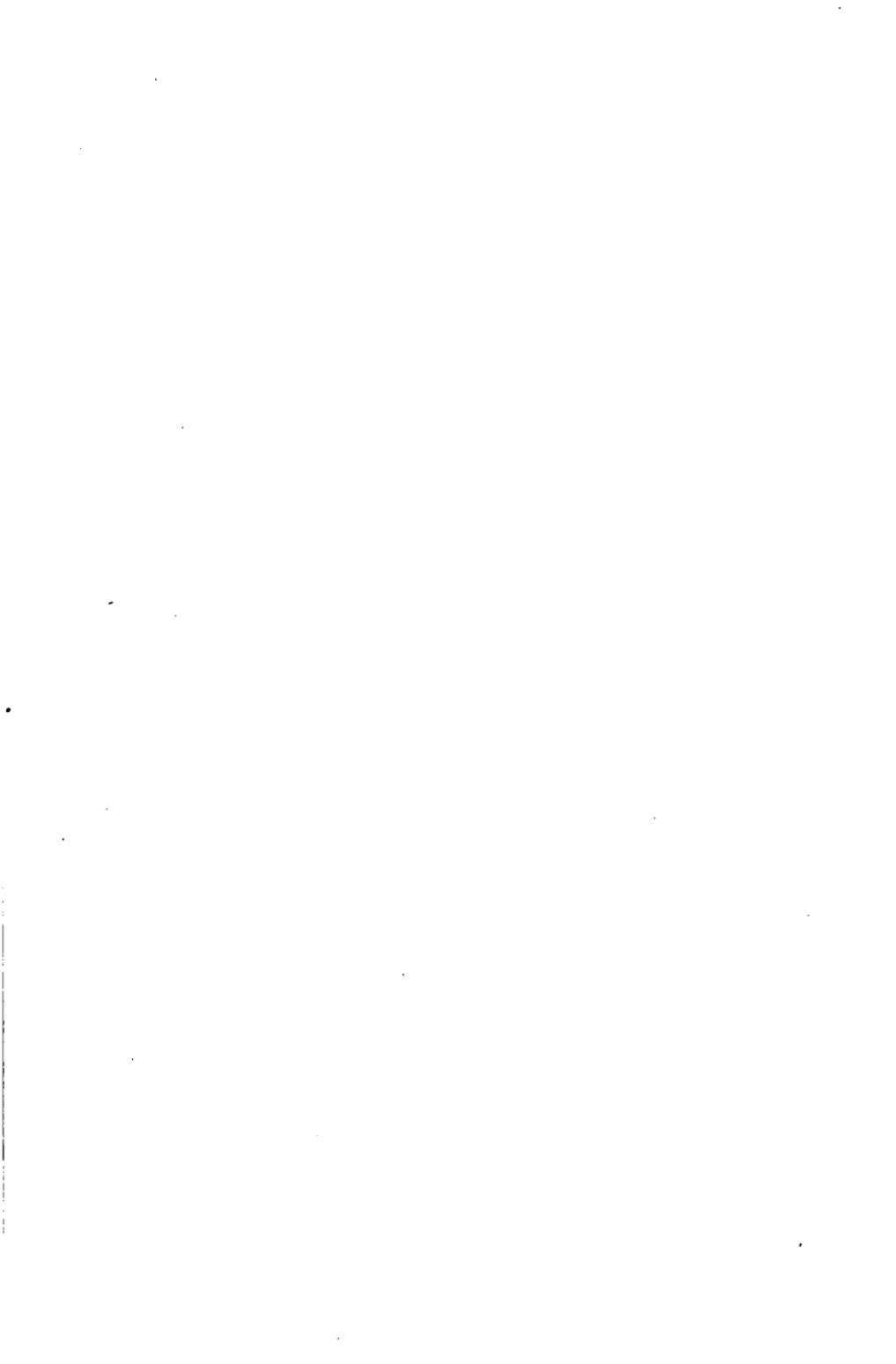
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

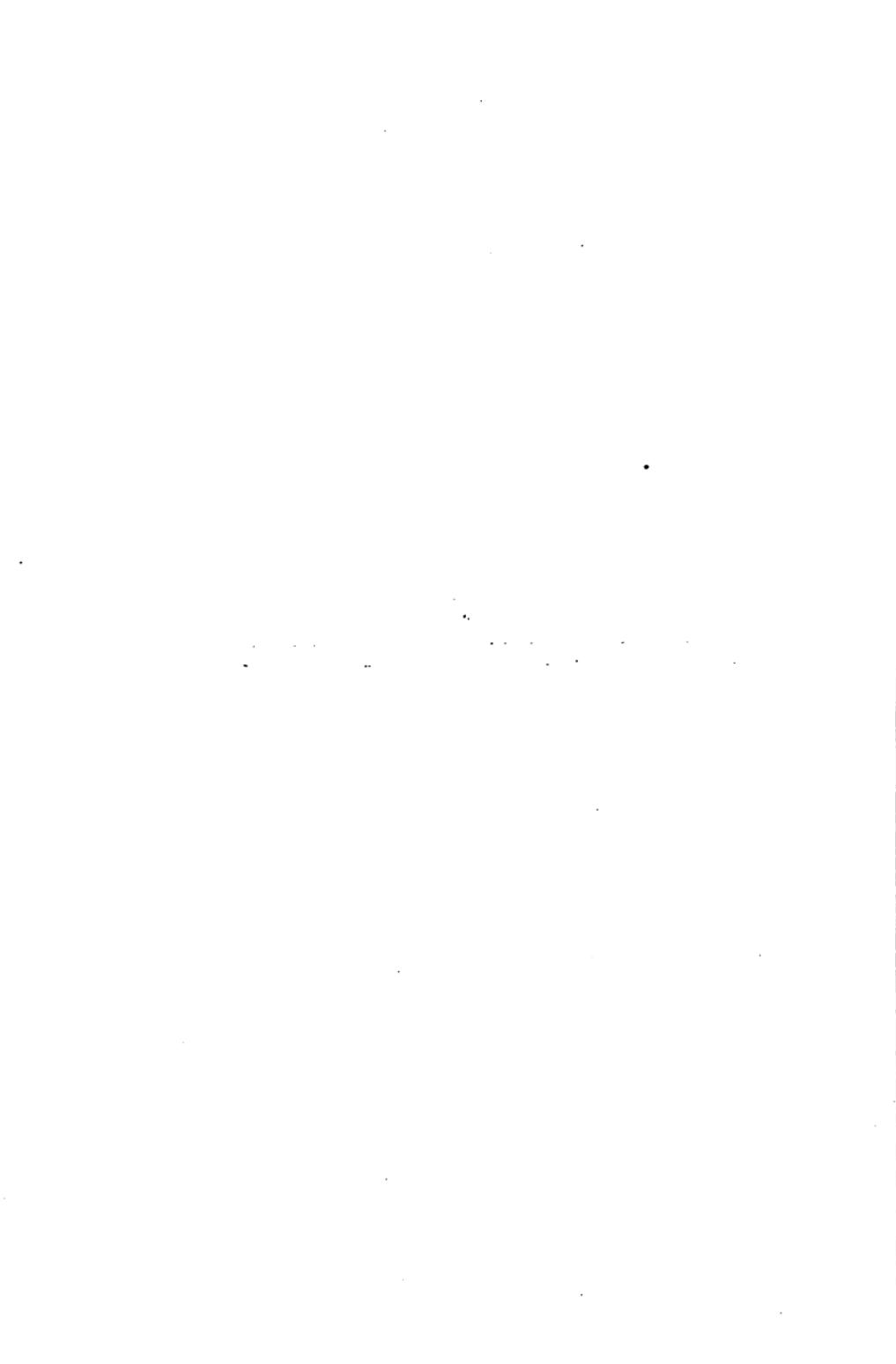
•••••••••••••••••••••
The
Evelyn M.
Almack
Memorial Fund
•••••••••••••••••••••

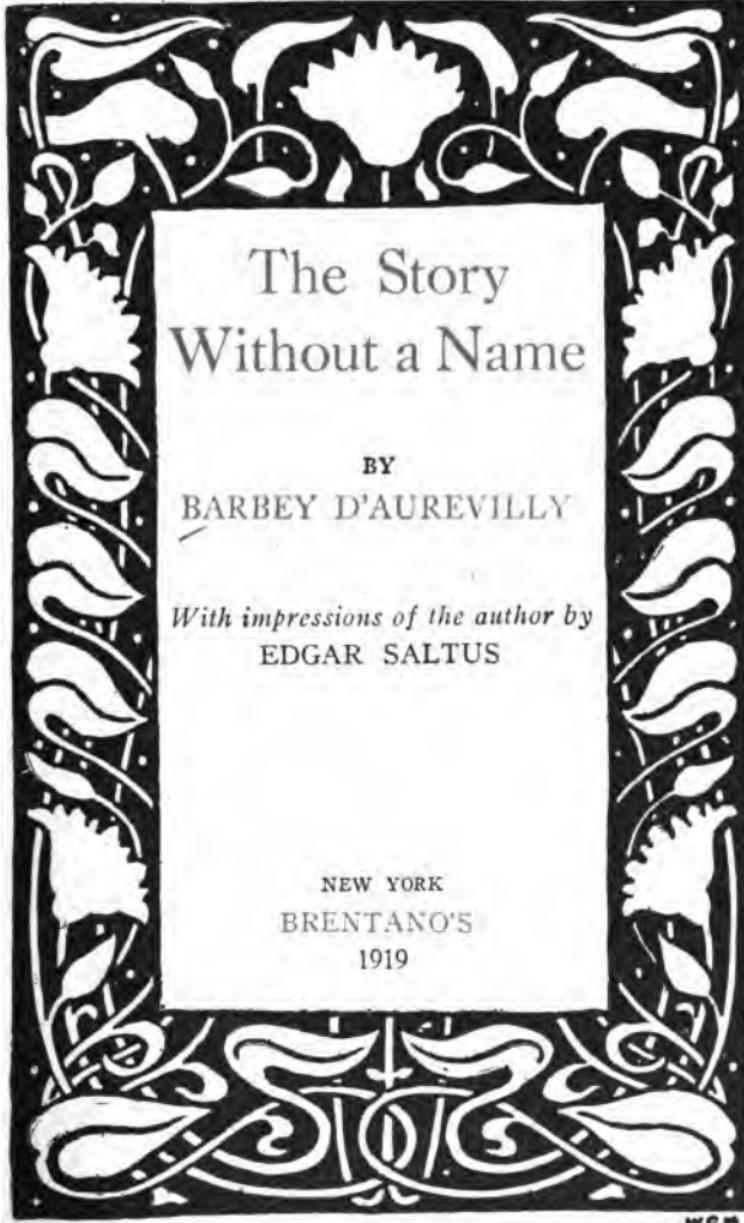
Stanford University Libraries





THE
STORY WITHOUT A NAME





The Story Without a Name

BY
BARBEY D'AUREVILLY

With impressions of the author by
EDGAR SALTUS

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1919

**Copyright, 1919, by
BRENTANO'S**

Barbey D'Aurevilly

WE usually get what we want, if we know how to want it, but we get too the consequences. Balzac wanted fame. The strumpet came and killed him. Barbey d'Aurevilly wanted obscurity and acquired it so amply that when I presented an earlier translation of *The Story Without a Name*, a local critic, who contrived to be both complimentary and amusing, said I had invented Barbey and that the vile story was my own vile work. *Inique mais folichon.*

The *Story Without a Name* is a masterpiece in duo-decimo. Very soberly told, it is unexceeded in fiendishness,

Introduction

except by the Huns and the *Conte cruel* that Villiers told of the fervent Inquisition. Another man overboard. Outside the *cénacle*—where he is much overrated—Villiers de l'Isle Adam is remarkably unknown. But that story of his will live when French is a dead language. It may be that *Salammbô* will survive it. Personally, I would rather have written *Salammbô* than own New York. For second choice I would take Villiers' little horror and, for third, Barbey's.

Barbey's other novels are more colored and less poignant. It is not given to every writer to surprise an unsuspecting reader in bed and make him shriek with fright. Barbey did it once and once is enormous. Twice would be excessive. Sacrilege and sorcery, shapes of sin, *les vieux castels*, *thèses*, to-

Introduction

gether with cognate accessories, he manipulated in an atmosphere charged with shivers and occasionally with chic. Here and there the chic is circumambient. In the odor of that opopanax you might fancy that if he ever stopped writing, it was because of imperative intrigues with incandescent duchesses who, save for him, would be ice. As a matter of fact, his main diversion consisted in exchanging the time of day with his concierge. I would give a red pippin to have seen him at it.

Otherwise his life was very enviable. He wrote for himself—which is the only way to write—and for thirty-six unknown friends. That is the ideal. Too fair though. Bourget, always pertinacious, ferreted him out, turned him into copy.

Introduction

“At the hour when, the curtains drawn, the candles lighted, this alchemist elaborates his work, little he cares whether or not it will interest you. You, the future reader, are absent from his mind. Is there without a world of vulgar sensations and commonplace destinies? He knows nothing of it. He is absorbed in his characters. Yes, in the literal meaning of the word, *his* characters, for he has projected them from his brain, as Jupiter projected Minerva, engendered and nourished by the purest substance of his being.”

If I did not know that Bourget wrote the foregoing, I would suspect him of it. Barring only Georges Ohnet, I know of no French writer who has succeeded so perfectly in being both emphatic and banal. Besides, as my friend Willy somewhere remarked: “Quand Ohnet mord c'est pour longtemps.” Ohnet is very satisfying. In reading him you realise that nowhere, at any time, has there been anything worse. Bourget

Introduction

lacks that distinction. He gives the impression that there may be something worse and yet manages to leave you wondering.

Paul de Saint-Victor strums a different guitar. Hugo said it was a joy to write a book which Saint-Victor would write about. Barbey said nothing. He preferred to be ignored.

Here is the guitar.

"In Barbey d'Aurevilly's work there is something brutal and exquisite, violent and tender. It is like the philters that sorcerers brewed in which were asphodels and vipers, tiger's blood and honey. Never has language been raised to a prouder paroxysm."

One may wonder what a proud paroxysm is, but otherwise the image leaps. Barbey wrote on a piano. You might guess it, precisely as you might guess that Hugo wrote in a pulpit.

Introduction

Hugo lifted the pulpit to where all of this world and portions of the next could see it. Barbey turned the piano into a palette. After Balzac it was assumed that no one could startle a printer. Balzac wrote on proof-sheets, rewrote the proofs, made abracadabras of them and ran in debt for the costs. He owed as much as Dumas made. Dumas was prince of the pen—without at all being lord of language—and Balzac the galley-slave. Fame has her forms.

Barbey's method was more ornate. On his piano were inks—gold, blue, red, green, black. Every emotion has its color, every note in music has. Rimbaud, a poet—one of the poètes maudits—sang a sonnet about the colors of the vowels. Unphilosophic persons who get in a temper may not see red but

Introduction

psychically they radiate it. The aura of the jealous shows not green but yellow. The auræ of sweethearts and swains are blue. What recent occultism has discovered, Barbey divined. According to the emotion that he depicted he used the corresponding ink. It was certainly ornate. Yet, as no one except his printer saw the rainbows, it was perhaps also insane. The rainbows had another charm. I have examined a few of them. Not a correction in the lot. They were painted with a pen that ran.

An ability to write in that fashion may indicate the genius, but hardly the purist. Geniuses often write badly and as much the better for them. Balzac is atrocious. It is only in inferior artists that you get what young ladies call style. Style consists in sandpaper,

Introduction

the choice of words and in so manipulating both that occasionally the words seem to leap, laugh and explode.

Grammar is an adjunct, not an obligation. No grammarian ever wrote a thing that is fit to read.

Barbey's sentences are none the less canonical. How, without revision, he managed it, is conjectural only on the supposition that he rehearsed them, at the top of his lungs, as Flaubert did, before putting them down. In a minor matter, he had another similarity with Flaubert. A minor matter may be momentous. Any conversation with a stranger gave him a pain in the stomach. He was shy and yet, through an agreeable contradiction, superb or so regarded himself. The leveled eyeglass, the curl of the lip, the easy insolence, the attitude which it pleased him to affect,

Introduction

all that was modeled after Brummel whose cigarette stumps he had pocketed.

Zola called him a clown. Well, why not? A clown is often brilliant, which Zola never was. Moreover, Barbey's sentences in addition to being canonical are often profound, and any profundities of Zola could play tag on the head of a pin. But Zola had his hour. During it he was Jupiter Feuilletonant. As such, homage was indicated. All he got from Barbey was an ignoring stare. In return, Zola ridiculed him, laughed at his clothes, at his garret. Perhaps afterward he wished he had held his pen. In a café that Barbey frequented, Vallès, the mad anarchist, shouted: "We want the heads of a hundred thousand imbeciles." Negligently Barbey yawned: "Zola's ought to suffice." At that, some one cut in: "He will be

Introduction

astonished when he hears it." Now for the superb. Barbey raised his eyeglass: "Since civilization began, men such as I, have been created to astonish men such as he." A trifle too superb perhaps, but finer than Zola's brickbats.

Barbey came by it naturally. Villiers was more or less authentically comte and claimed a more or less authentic descent from a problematic crusader. But if I have the facts correctly, Barbey descended from one of the numbered Louis' of France. Nowadays, the blood of kings—unless you can take it away from them—is not much to boast of. Yet, at the time, it produced the superb which Barbey and Villiers paraded. Apart from that, Barbey was Gautier in black.

Gautier was a poet, and if I bring that coal to Newcastle it is only that with it

Introduction

I may note that a poet is not a human being. I lived with one once—but not twice. There are towers of jade to which the muse may come but from which sanity departs. Gautier's enthusiasms were very violent. They were splendid, lavish and noisy. He too had a palette. On Barbey's piano there was ink of every color. Gautier used but one. It was gold. But was it with ink that he wrote? The first Francis of France wrote with a diamond, which is the proper pen for a sovereign. In the *Emaux et Camées* Gautier commends a humming-bird's feather. I doubt that he ever tried one but I suspect that, drunk every morning, as a poet should be, with the nectar he had sipped in dream, he kept a cup of it before him. What Barbey's brew was, Saint-Victor has told.

Introduction

There is a deeper antithesis. Gautier was pagan. Before him was the joy of life. Barbey was a Catholic. Behind him was the fear of hell. Gautier went to Spain and afterward wrote about Russia. Whether he went there is uncertain. He said he had and he believed it. Huysmans passed an evening at Henry's bar—around the corner from the rue de la Paix—and believed he had been in London. But if Gautier omitted to go to Russia, he made himself at home in the Pays des songes. Barbey followed him to that realm, strange and unique, which all of us interpret temperamentally and which each must visit alone. Back of the doors that close behind our birth crouch shapes beautiful or diabolic, shapes fashioned perhaps in our anterior lives. In the land of dreams they greet us. Occultists say

Introduction

that these shapes are not figments of fancy but actual entities that move and have their being as, in the gulfs of sleep, many of us do move and have our being, on another plane. It is hazardous to argue with an occultist. The only safe way is to agree. But real or unreal, the shapes that Gautier met had mouths of many tunes. Apart from inflammatory duchesses, those that Barbey saw were silent. They came clad in grey or else blood-red, with faces cicatrised and ashen. They fed him sorrow with a long spoon. They fed him horror also.

I think he enjoyed it. Madmen have a point of view that interests them and which, I am sure, is very enviable. Barbey's enjoyment induced anthropophobia which, in his case, was not an aversion to humanity but a desire to be undisturbed at his piano, alone with

Introduction

the hypnagogic hallucinations that it evoked.

At the time, he too had had his hour. In age he resembled Dante, not physically merely, but figuratively. He also had been in hell. But in his youth he stood for Balzac's portrait of Lucien de Rubempré. Fame ogled Lucien and the hussy made eyes at Barbey. On the boulevards he was Somebody. As he passed before the terraced cafés, you knew it. "Regarde un peu! C'est Barbey d'Aurevilly!"

He was worth it. If you had not known better you would have said: "Mais non, c'est d'Orsay!" The same air, if you please: the same costume; the blue coat, high-collared, gold-buttoned, short-waisted, long-tailed: the skin-tight trousers; the curled-brim beaver; the jeweled cane, the jeweled snuff-box,

Introduction

the fob, the neckcloth, that air!—and the insolence on the tip of the tongue. Not so long ago, either. I saw him at a moment when, just across the Channel, there were Gaiety Girls, a gardenia in your buttonhole and the inflated proprieties of the Victorian régime.

In that fashion he promenaded, always alone. Meanwhile something had happened. It is said that in the temple of Zeus Lycaeos, men lost their shadow, their future as well. Villiers may have ventured there. He disappeared. He was gone for years, though where no one knew. Barbey also executed a fugue, perhaps to the Cévennes, where this horrible story, the Story without a Smile, occurred. But meanwhile something had happened, some incident that contrived to be catastrophic. It drove him away, not omitting to put a

Introduction

mark on him and more profoundly than Brummel—whom he had known—put another. It made him seek what the solitary ever do seek, obscurity. He courted it, as imbeciles court fame. Thereafter it was only at his garret in the rue Rousselet—a garret furnished, I was told, in buhl and ormulu, the rickety remnants of early ease—it was only there that fame presumed to knock.

At Caen, when Brummel entertained, his servant bawled: “The Duchess of Devonshire! His royal highness, the Regent! My lord Avanly!” To the phantom guests Brummel bowed, aired his wit. Barbey had no servant. It was he who opened the door and to guests nobler than those that appeared at Caen. Fame came and with her Love, sister

Introduction

visions, indistinguishably fair, indistinguishably false. On the threshold, with lips that said, Drink me! with arms that cried, Take us! before him they stood. The door closed on them. Barbey was back at his piano, disdainful of either, indifferent to both, a host still, but the host of wraiths brain-created and not desire-born.

Gautier had a ballet in his mind, Barbey a morgue. Of the two, I like Barbey best, not because he is superior—he is not—but because affection does not always go with the river. Besides, it is easy enough to like an author whom you have read, though, by the same token, it is easier still to loathe him. Georges Ohnet makes me vomit.

Gautier had two daughters. One married Catulle Mendès; the other, Emile Bergerat. Mendès wrote a hun-

Introduction

dred novels and not a single book. Bergerat wrote one book, and if you can obtain a copy, you will get glimmers of the charm made man which Gautier was.

Barbey had daughters also, daughters of dream, born on a piano which was a palette. Nowadays, like Bergerat's book, they are mainly *o. p.* Books have their destinies. Æschylus dedicated his tragedies to Time. Time, always the gentleman, acknowledged the compliment by storing in camphor as many of them as the fates and the fathers allowed. Barbey, more subtly, I think, dedicated his wares to Art. Time passes, nations crumble, only art survives. There are sunetoi who still swear by Æschylus. His sublimity is too antique for me. But I can and do admire Barbey, whose art, which en-

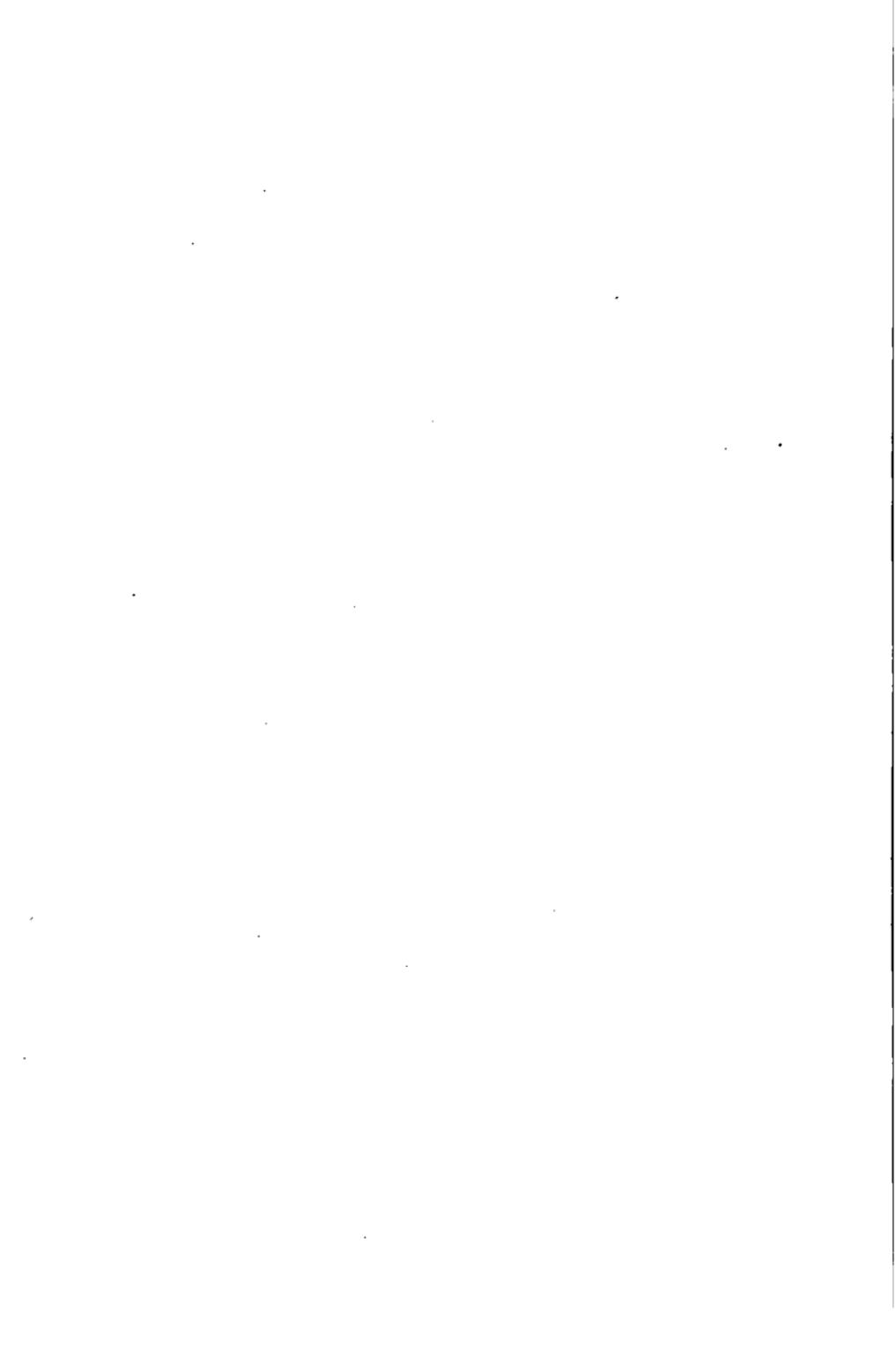
Introduction

dures, has in it the malignity of the gargoyle of Notre Dame—monsters leaning from the turrets that they may mark across the ages the sameness of the joys and griefs of man. What but monsters could be compelled to do that? Barbey created a brood that differs from the griffons and chimeras of Our Lady, yet only in this, the litter is alive and therefore more horrible.

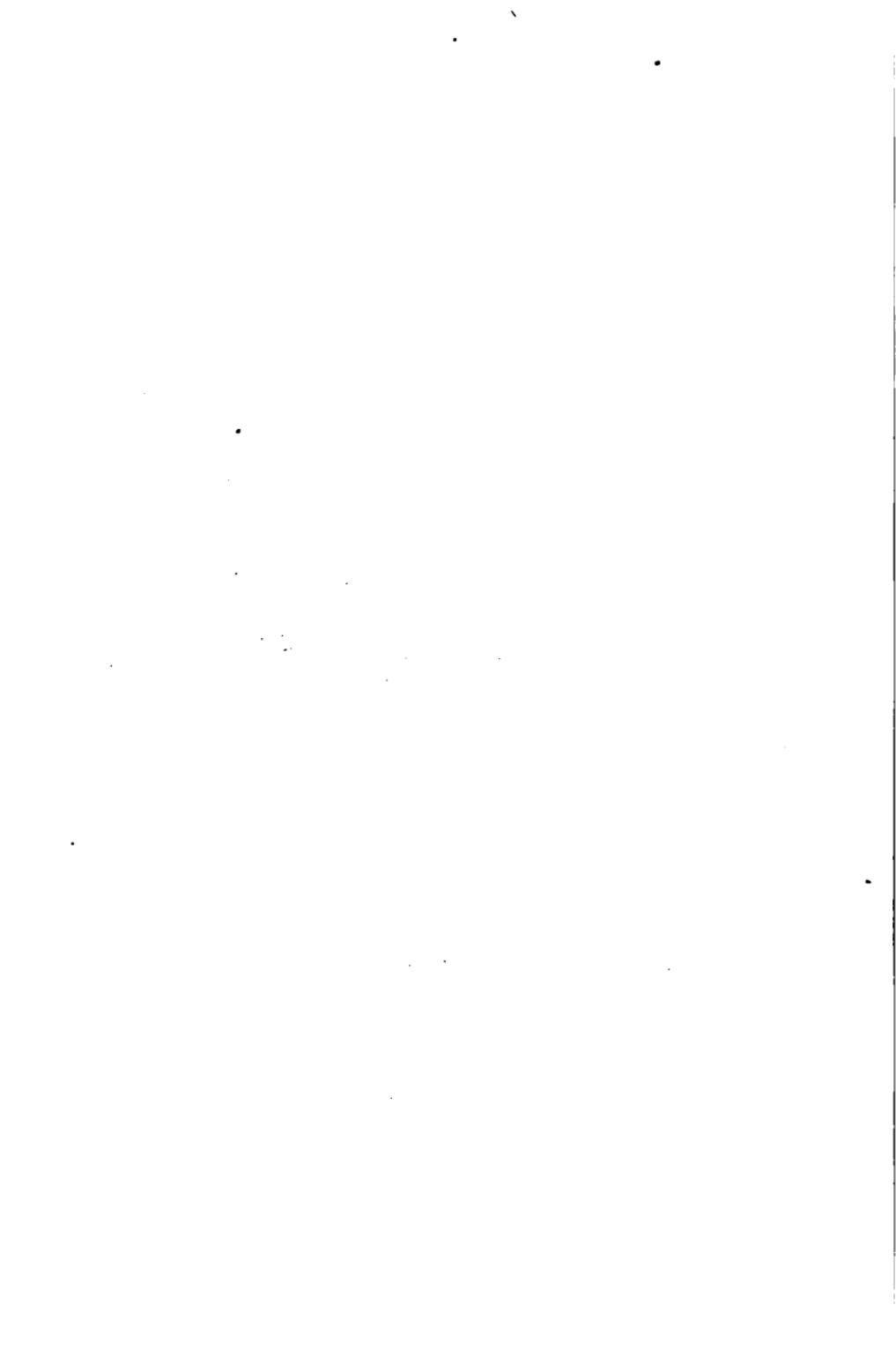
The effect, very comforting in itself, achieved its purpose. Popularity never annoyed him, fame he let pass by. Gautier's karma was fairer—or more vulgar, according to the point of view. He was the torch of an epoch of which Barbey is now the ghost.

EDGAR SALTUS.

New York, February, 1919.



THE
STORY WITHOUT A NAME



The Story Without a Name

I

ONE day just prior to the French Revolution, in a village at the foot of the Cévennes, between vespers and evening service, a Capuchin was preaching. The church was dim, and the dimness was heightened by the mountains that surrounded it, which embraced it, and which about the ulterior houses rose sheerly into space. The descent was a circular pathway twisted like a corkscrew. The mountains were very green; there were rush-

The Story Without a Name

ing streams, and silver bubbles, and trout so plentiful that you could catch them with the hand; but in regard to situation no village was ever more desolately placed.

A man's birthplace is like his mother, he is supposed to love her whether she is worthy or not. Were it otherwise, human beings to whom the open is a necessity could never have remained in a pit such as that. Merely the desire to breathe would have sent them over the mountain walls. I lived there nearly a month; during that time I was like a crushed titan, physically overwhelmed by the impression which those mountains gave. Even now, in thinking of them, I feel their weight on my heart. The inhabitants reminded me of miners living in the under-earth, and again of those captives of earlier cloisters who

The Story Without a Name

prayed, year in, year out, forgotten in shadowy crypts.

As for the village, I might compare it to a pen-sketch in China ink, a collection of old houses blackened by age. But it possessed a peculiarity of its own, the blackness became blacker, a black on black, one which the perpendicular shadows of the enveloping heights increased. It resembled nothing so much as a prison where light never enters, where the walls are too steep for the sun to scale. Sometimes at high noon I could not catch a glimpse of day. It is a place where Byron should have written his Darkness; it is a place where Rembrandt might have created that effect of his, the absence of light, or rather it is there he could have found it.

In summer, when the inhabitants look up at the blue garret window that hangs

The Story Without a Name

a thousand feet above them, they are not wholly sure whether the day is fair or not. On this particular day, however, the window was not blue; it was gray. Clouds had closed the aperture. The bottle was corked.

The entire population was then at church, an austere edifice, built in the the thirteenth century, in which—the sombre twilight aiding—not even lynx eyes, had there been any, could have read a word from the prayers. As is customary, the candles had been extinguished at the beginning of the sermon, and the congregation, huddled together like tiles on a roof, were as invisible to the preacher as he, separated and afar in the pulpit, was invisible to them. But though they could not see very clearly, at least they could hear. It is only in the choir, runs the proverb, that Cap-

The Story Without a Name

uchins talk through the nose. The Capuchin who was preaching then had a voice which was not alone vibrant, but resonant enough to announce the most terrible dogmas of the Church. He was then announcing them. He was preaching of hell.

Everything about the church, the severity of the style, the approach of night that entered in waves, profounder and more insistent each moment, lent to the speech of the speaker an extraordinary relief. The statues of the saints, veiled in the draperies with which they are covered during Lent, were like mysterious phantoms, motionless in their niches; and the preacher, whose indistinct silhouette swayed across the white column against which the pulpit leaned, seemed a phantom also. You would have said, a specter

The Story Without a Name

preaching to ghosts. Even the thunder of his voice, powerful in its actuality though it was, and yet which appeared to belong to no one, seemed to fall from above.

The impression of it all was so thrilling, the attention so great, the silence so absolute, that when, for a moment, he stopped to draw breath you heard from without the sob of rilles trickling along the mountain-sides, adding to the melancholy of shadows the malancholy of waters displaced.

The eloquence which the preacher displayed must surely have been heightened by the ambient influences that I have described. In listening to it every ear was turned, every head was bowed, save two, the heads of a mother and daughter. That evening, after the sermon, the preacher was to sup with them;

The Story Without a Name

they were curious to see him, and they bent forward in an effort to catch a glimpse of their guest, lost in the penumbra of the arch.

It may be remembered that, in those days, strangers, members of some distant order, preached during Lent throughout the parishes of France. These wandering servants of God, the people, with the unconscious poetry which is theirs, called the Swallows of Lent. And when one of them alighted in hamlet or city a nest was made for him in the foremost mansion of the place, a form of hospitality which rich and religious households gratefully dispensed, and which, in the provinces where life is monotonous, lent a peculiar interest to the preacher, who each year brought with him that aroma of the unknown and the faraway which the

The Story Without a Name

isolated love to inhale. The most rapid seductions that the chronicles of love recount are those accomplished by travelers who have merely passed, and of whom that passing constituted the unique attraction.

The monk who was fulminating then on the terrors of hell hardly seemed apt to sow anything else than the fear of God. And as he fulminated he did not know, nor did the two women who were trying to catch a glimpse of him know, that the hell he preached he was to leave in their hearts.

But that evening as they left the church, their pardonable if provincial curiosity was unsatisfied. They had not caught a glimpse of the terrible preacher of a terrible creed; and concerning him they had no remarks to make, except regarding his ability,

The Story Without a Name

which seemed to them very great. As they wrapped themselves in their furs, they told each other that they had never heard a better sermon. Both were fervent believers, and both, according to the sacramental expression, pious as saints. They were called the Ladies de Ferjol. That evening they returned home quite animated. Heretofore, during Lent, they had seen and entertained many a preacher; there had been Prémontrés, Génovéfains, Dominicans, and Eudists, but a Capuchin never. No one of that mendicant order of St. Francis, of which the costume—and costumes always more or less preoccupy women—is so poetic and picturesque, had ever passed that way. Mme. de Ferjol, who had traveled, had seen it before; but her daughter, who was only sixteen, knew no other Capuchin than the one which

The Story Without a Name

on the corner of the mantel in the dining-room served as barometer—the charming, old - fashioned barometer, which, like so many other charming things, exists no more.

The monk who presently caused himself to be announced, and who then entered the room where the ladies awaited him, did not in the least resemble the Capuchin that hooded himself in stormy weather and unhooded himself in fair. He was of a different type from the one invented by the charming imagination of our fathers.

In the France of olden time, even in days of faith, there was much hilarity over both priest and monk, but especially over the latter. Later, in a less fervent epoch, the wicked and witty regent who laughed at everything said to a Capuchin who called himself un-

The Story Without a Name

worthy of his calling, "But what the deuce are you worthy of if you are not worthy of being a Capuchin?" The eighteenth century, which despised history, as Mirabeau did, a disdain that history will repay as it has already repaid Mirabeau, forgot that Charles V had been a Capuchin, and during its entire span covered the order with ridicule and epigram.

The Capuchin who appeared that evening before the Ladies de Ferjol was manifestly not made for either ridicule or epigram. He was about thirty: tall, robust, imposing. He wore a short beard curled like that of Hercules, rather dark, the color of bronze. The world admires pride, and his expression, which asked no indulgence because of his cloth, had in it nothing of the voluntary humility of his order. Neither had

The Story Without a Name

his attitude. Merely in stretching his hand he had the air of one commanding respect. And what a hand it was!—a hand so superb that the whiteness of it, issuing from the wide sleeve, startled; a hand royally beautiful that stretched imperially for alms.

As is customary in the homes of the devout, the servant, Agathe Thousard by name, had already given him water for the feet, and they now shone in their sandals like marble, sculptured by Phidias. To the ladies he bowed very distantly, after the Oriental fashion, the arms crossed on the breast, and as he bowed, no one, not even Voltaire, would have jested at him. The red buttons of the Cardinalate were never to star his robe, but he looked worthy to bear them; and as the ladies curtsied it occurred to them that the voice that they had

The Story Without a Name

heard falling from the pulpit through the increasing shadows of night was exactly suited to the man.

It being Lent, and this priest of abstinence having come to represent and preach it, they offered him the usual Lenten repast, string-beans cooked in oil, celery salad, beets mixed with anchovies, tunny-fish, and stewed oysters. Therewith was a bottle of Château du Pape, but that, though it was a Catholic wine, he refused. Of the food, however, he ate heartily, and to his hostesses he seemed, while devoid of affectation, fully possessed of the dignity and severity of his cloth. The hood, which on entering the room he threw back on his shoulders, disclosed a neck that might have belonged to a Roman proconsul, and an enormous cranium polished as a mirror and circled with a coronet of hair, which

The Story Without a Name

was bronzed like his beard, and curled as it.

The members of his order, who are mendicants in the name of Christ, are never anywhere out of place, religion having placed them on a footing of equality with the notables of the earth, and his manner was that of one accustomed to the best society. In spite of this he was not sympathetic to either of his hostesses. To their thinking he was lacking in the affable simplicity which other priests who had been their guests had displayed. He was imposing, and yet he indisposed. He made them uncomfortable, ill at ease, though how or why they were unable to decide. In the chill of his eyes, in the expression of his mouth, there was an audacity startling and significant. He looked

The Story Without a Name

like a man of whom you say: 'He is capable of anything.'

One evening, when a sort of familiarity had sprung up between him and the gentlewomen, Mme. de Ferjol, who had been scrutinizing him from beneath the shade of the lamp, murmured, reflectively:

"Father, I wonder what you would be if you were not a priest?"

Apparently the remark amused him. He smiled, but what a smile! Mme. de Ferjol never forgot it, and later, it stabbed her heart with a horrible conviction.

As a matter of fact, his physiognomy was little in harmony with the humility of his calling, yet during the forty days which he passed in the house, and in spite, too, of the remark that involun-

The Story Without a Name

tarily had escaped her, Mme. de Ferjol had not a fault to find with him. In speech, in bearing, in everything, he was irreproachable.

“He would be better off in La Trappe than in a monastery,” Mme. de Ferjol said to her daughter when they were alone, and the conversation turned on the monk and the audacity of his expression. For La Trappe, because of the silence which is observed there, and the severity of its regulations, is, in the opinion of the world, particularly adapted to those who have a crime to expiate.

Mme. de Ferjol was gifted with great penetration, and although for years she had been highly devout, yet the benevolence that religion inculcates in no wise prevented her from exercising her penetration, which, parenthetically, was that

The Story Without a Name

of a woman of the world. She was intelligent, quite able to appreciate the eloquence which Father Riculf displayed—a mediæval name that fitted him perfectly; and yet the eloquence attracted her as little as did the man. It was the same way with her daughter, whom that eloquence frightened.

To the two gentlewomen the eloquence and the man were equally distasteful, so much so even that they did not confess to him. The other women of the village fairly doted on him, and during the entire time that he was among them his confessional was thronged. His hostesses were the only ones who remained away, an abstention that surprised their neighbors. But at church, as at home, these ladies seemed to have discovered about him a mysterious and isolating circle, and at

The Story Without a Name

the circumference of that circle they stopped.

It may be, through the intuition which we all possess, they divined that he was inimical to their happiness.

II

THE Baroness de Ferjol cared little for the hamlet in which she lived. She was born elsewhere, in Normandy, and her parents were people of rank. It was her marriage, one purely of love, that had thrown her in what, when thinking of the horizons and luxuriant landscapes of her birthplace, she disdainfully described as an ant-hole. The man she loved had brought her there, and for years that love had moved the mountains back and bathed the valley with increasing light.

Born Jacqueline - Marie - Louise d'Olonde, she had been captivated by the baron, then a captain of an infantry

The Story Without a Name

regiment which, during the last years of the reign of Louis XVI, was quartered at St. Sauveur as a guard against a possible attack by the English. The camp was but a small one, and those who saw it are dead long since. My grandmother was one of the latter; its officers she had sumptuously entertained, and during my childhood she often spoke of the camp with that accent old people have when speaking of things they have seen.

The Baron de Ferjol she had known very well. He had danced with Mlle. d'Olonde in the best houses of St. Sauveur at a time when there was much dancing going on, and he had turned the young woman's head completely. He was, my grandmother declared, very handsome. He wore a white uniform, with collar and facings of blue.

The Story Without a Name

He was fair, moreover, and women think that blue is particularly suited to blonds.

The surprise of my grandmother on learning that he had turned Mlle. d'Olonde's head had not therefore been very great. He had turned it so completely even, that the young woman, who was considered pride itself, consented to an elopement.

Mlle. d'Olonde was an orphan. The society in which she moved, and which to this day has changed but little, was orderly, moral, religious, Jansenist even. As a consequence, the scandal which her elopement created was terrific; her guardians had no choice; they consented to her marriage with the baron, who thereupon took her away to the Cévennes, where his home was.

Unfortunately, the baron died young.

The Story Without a Name

He left his wife in the depths of a mountain funnel which he had widened by his presence and his love, and of which the walls, tightening in on her, threw another black veil over a heart already in black. With a courage of her own she remained in that pit. When the sky passed from her heart she did not try to ascend the suffocating mountains in an effort to find another above her head. She crouched in the gulf and grief of widowhood.

For a moment she thought of returning to Normandy, but the memory of her elopement, and the scorn which might be her greeting prevented. She had no wish to wound her wings against casements that she herself had broken. Practical, as every Norman is, she cared little for the beauty of externals. Where there was none, its absence was

The Story Without a Name

unnoticed. There was nothing dreamy about her, her disposition was not one to be affected by such a thing as homesickness. By nature she was both firm and equable, but her temperament was ardent. That indeed her marriage had only too clearly shown.

The ardor, however, was concentrated, and when after the death of her husband she flung herself into religion, suddenly she became severe.

The melancholy hamlet in which she was entombed seemed to her quite as fit to live in as to die in. The overhanging mountains that shadowed it suited her perfectly well. When a picture is dreary the frame should be dark.

At the age of forty the Baroness de Ferjol was a tall, slim brunette, who seemed interiorly illuminated by an unseen fire, one that burned beneath cin-

The Story Without a Name

ders in the marrow of her bones. Women admitted that formerly she had been handsome—but not attractive, they added, with that pleasure which such attenuations usually procure. But her beauty, that had been disagreeable to other women merely because it was overwhelming, was buried with the man she had loved. When he died she ceased to think of it. He was the one mirror in which she had admired herself, and in losing him who had been to her the universe, she reconveyed the ardor of her love to her child. But the modesty which ardent temperaments frequently possess had prevented her from displaying to her husband the violence of the passion which he had aroused; and in the same manner she concealed her affection from her child, whom she loved more because she was

The Story Without a Name

the child of her husband than because she was her own; in fact, because even in maternity she was more wife than mother.

With perfect unconsciousness and with an entire absence of affectation, Mme. de Ferjol exhibited to her daughter, and for that matter to everyone else, a sort of rigid majesty, which her daughter, as everyone else, was forced to endure. When you saw her, the unsympathetic ascendancy which she possessed was instantly understood. Her figure, which was that of a matron; her proud and chiseled features; the black coils of her hair, which on the temples were nearly white, rendering them austerer and almost cruel, and which in their unpitying gray seemed to have claws to cling with and rest there among the resisting coils of black—in all this

The Story Without a Name

there was something too imperious, too despotic, too Roman for her to have been otherwise than as she was. The sight of her was enough to draw an exclamation from the most ordinary observer, but to a painter or a poet that wan widow would have recalled the mother of Spartacus or the mother of Coriolanus. And—mark the stupidity of fate!—the woman who possessed this energetic and desolate appearance, who seemed created to tame the haughtiest of rebels, and in the name of their fathers command heroes at war, had absolutely nothing to do save educate and bring up a poor little innocent girl.

There was indeed nothing more innocent, nothing more girlish, than Lasthénie de Ferjol. She was then just emerging from childhood. All her life she had lived in the hamlet, without

The Story Without a Name

leaving its sunless humidity once. She was the lily of the valley, the lily that loves the shadows, and grows best in the corners of garden walls where the sun never shines. Lasthénie had all the purity of that white flower, and something of its mystery also. In character and physiognomy she differed entirely from her mother. On seeing her you wondered that such fragility could come from such force. Her face was one that the world considered pretty rather than beautiful, a subject of which the world knows nothing; she was slim-waisted and for her age well developed, a combination noticeable in accomplished women. Her hair was as fair as her father's—the ideal baron who after a fashion of the hour sometimes put pink powder in his own—a little eccentricity that afterwards, at the beginning of the

The Story Without a Name

present century, the Abbé Delille, in spite of his ugliness, which was atrocious, adopted for himself. But Lasthénie had no other powder than that which is natural to the plumage of the melancholy and tender dove. Beneath her hair, her eyes, framed in the dead-white of her skin, shone as large and as brilliant as certain mirrors, which, because perhaps of their depth and purity, reflect a shimmer of green. And these eyes, pale gray-green—the color of the leaf of the willow, lover of the waters—were veiled with long, dark, gold lashes, that rested wearily on the porcelain of her cheek. Everything about her resembled them. The languor of her bearing was the languor of those lashes. In my life I have known but *one* person who possessed that languid charm, and never shall I forget her.

The Story Without a Name

She limped, and divinely. Lasthénie did not limp, but she seemed to. She had the fascination of women who do limp slightly, and whose limp sways the gown with adorable undulations. Briefly, then, in all her being she exhaled that heavenly weakness before which men of strength and heart bend the knee.

She loved her mother, but she feared her. She loved her as certain believers love God, tremblingly. Mme. de Ferjol had never shown, and never could show, that abandonment of confidence which mothers whose tenderness overflows inspire in their children. And with this mother, imposing and mournful, who seemed to live in and share the silence of her husband's tomb, unrestraint and confidence were impossible. .

And so it came about that Lasthénie,

The Story Without a Name

thus repelled, lost herself in dream; and in the depths of a cup whose rim was a mountain-chain, she lived, deluged with shadows, alone with thoughts which, unlike the mountain-chain, had no zig-zag path whereby an ascent could have been effected.

She hid her thoughts and feelings, and yet she was artless, though to have found that artlessness you would have had to seek it among the wellsprings of her being, where it bubbled as water bubbles when a hand is plunged beneath the surface. No one had ever thought of plunging into Lasthénie's soul. Her mother adored her, the more perhaps because she resembled the man whom she had so wholly loved. She enjoyed her in silence, she feasted on her without saying a word. Had her piety been a little less fervent, a trifle less rigid,

The Story Without a Name

she would have eaten her up with kisses, and in the warmth of caresses a heart naturally timid might have unfolded like a bud. But in restraining herself, she restrained her daughter. She held her hand like a wall against the source of those sentiments that seek their rest in a mother's heart, and which, not finding it, flow back.

To our own misfortune the law which governs hearts is crueler than the law that governs things. Once the hand that made the wall and opposed the expansion is withdrawn, the source, freed from the obstacle, begins to flow anew, more impetuously than before; but to the heart there always comes a moment when sentiments absorb themselves and disappear, just as blood in mortal wounds ceases to flow through the open flesh. And even then blood can still

The Story Without a Name

be drawn, while sentiments too long restrained coagulate.

In this manner, although mother and daughter had never been separated, although in the little details of life they always acted in concert, and although they loved each other dearly, they were alone, isolated in an isolation shared jointly. Mme. de Ferjol, who was strong by nature, and who in the hallucinations of memory had ever before her the man whom she had loved with a degree of passion that seemed culpable to her now, felt the isolation less than Lasthénie.

With Lasthénie it was different. She had no past. Her dormant faculties were about to awake, and the isolation made her suffer—vaguely, it is true, and more as an indisposition might than actual pain. Yet that was because every-

The Story Without a Name

thing within her still was vague. Then, too, from the cradle up to the present hour of her life, more or less she had always suffered. The misery of life consists in becoming accustomed to certain things. And Lasthénie had become as accustomed to the melancholy of her isolated childhood as she had to the melancholy of the land in which she was born, one which dropped upon her its pitiful ray of light, and shut out the horizon with its mountainous walls. She had become accustomed to these things just as she had become accustomed to the melancholy solitude of her home. For her mother, who was rich, and belonged to an epoch in which classes that were to disappear had not yet ceased to exist, saw very little of the hamlet, where, so far as society went, there was really nothing for a woman like herself.

The Story Without a Name

When she had come there with her husband, she was so intoxicated with happiness that she would not have stirred for the world. It seemed to her then that some of the happiness would be taken from her, that it would be profaned, did she permit herself to be drawn into contact with others. And when that happiness passed with the passing of the man whom she adored, she asked consolation of no one. She lived alone without manifesting any affectionation of solitude or of grief; civil to everyone, but civil with that chill which dismisses without appeal, yet which is without harshness, and does not wound. The little hamlet understood it perfectly. Mme. de Ferjol was too much above the common run for anyone to be annoyed at an attitude which the death of her husband sufficiently explained.

The Story Without a Name

It was taken for granted that she lived only for her daughter; and, knowing the mother to be rich, the possessor of a large estate in Normandy, it was rumored that when the daughter was of marriageable age she would go back with her to where her estate and fortune were.

In the neighborhood there were no suitable suitors for Mlle. de Ferjol, and in the event of marriage no one believed that Mme. de Ferjol would consent to a separation from a daughter from whom she had never separated, and whom, even when the question of education arose, she had not permitted to enter the convent of the neighboring town.

Mme. de Ferjol attended to her daughter's education herself. She taught her all she knew, which was little. But in those days the instruction of young girls

The Story Without a Name

of good families was limited to noble sentiments and fine manners, with which they got along very well. Once in society they divined everything without having learned a thing. Nowadays they are taught everything, and understand nothing. Mme. de Ferjol, convinced that, in being near her, Lasthénie would always possess the sentiments and the manners of her rank, directed her daughter's attention to the worship of God. Tender by nature, endowed with a soul that was tenderness itself, Lasthénie turned to religion naturally. In prayer she sought to express those things concerning which her mother never asked; yet in the confidences she gave to an altar she could not forget the possibility of confiding to one who had suffered her to make no confidences at all. And it was perhaps because of that

The Story Without a Name

that religion failed to bring her the delight it gives to those that have unquestioning faith. There was in her something more, or something less, than that which is requisite to those who are happy only in God and through Him. She filled every duty of a Christian with the simplicity of perfect faith; she followed her mother to church, with her visited the poor, partook of communion with her; and yet none of these things placed on the dead white of her forehead the ray of light that belongs to youth.

Disturbed by the melancholy which the girl exhibited, and which in view of the purity of her life seemed inexplicable, now and again Mme. de Ferjol would ask:

“Is it because you are not fervent enough?”

The Story Without a Name

Instead of the doubt and severity of that question, if the mother had only taken the child in her arms and let her there pour out all that was in her mind, her eyes, and heart, it would have been better for both of them. But that she did not do; she resisted even the temptation; and as Lasthénie knew no one but her mother, there was no one in whom she could confide. Her soul was suffocating, and at the time when this story begins the pity of it is that she did not die of that suffocation.

III

TEN o'clock in the morning. Lent was almost over. It was the day before Easter, and the Ladies de Ferjol, after assisting at the service and the washing of the altars, had returned to their home.

The house was in the center of a little square that alone separated it from the church. The church itself was of the thirteenth century; its frontal was Romanic, crushed in, so to speak, and with an energy that recalled the barbarian who flung himself flat on his face before the cross of our Lord. The square was paved with cat's-heads—triangular stones; and it was so small that these

The Story Without a Name

ladies, who haunted the church, could, when it rained, cross without an umbrella. The house in which they lived was an immense edifice of no particular style, built subsequent to the church. The ancestors of the Baron de Ferjol had occupied it for generations, and as a consequence it was sadly out of date. It was antique and uncomfortable, one of those habitations at which architects jeer, and the possessors decline to part with unless actual want compels. The black corners of dilapidated homes where perhaps the ghosts of progenitors crouch, where childhood has played and age has come, cry out against such sacrilege.

Mme. de Ferjol, who was born elsewhere, might have readily rid herself of the building, but she had preferred to keep it. There were the traditions of

The Story Without a Name

her husband's family to be respected, and besides, as in the City Celestial, this gaunt, gray, haggard house held for her walls of gold, walls that were indestructible, aglow with glitter, built by Love in days of Delight.

It was with the idea of sheltering the progeny, in whose multiplication our forefathers took a religious pride, that the vast house was originally built; but now, since death had come, and its sole occupants were two women, lost in its immensity, it seemed vaster than before. It was cold, too, uninviting, imposing indeed, because it was spacious, and space makes a house magnificent as it does a landscape; yet, such as it was, it interested everyone that visited it. The ceilings were remote, the corridors intersected, and it had a stairway steep as the stairs of a clock tower, and so broad

The Story Without a Name

that fourteen horses could mount its hundred steps abreast, a feat that had been accomplished, it was said, during the war of the Chemises Blanches and Jean Cavalier.

This gigantic stairway seemed to have been built for another house. It was perhaps all that remained of some castle that had fallen to pieces, one perhaps which the misfortunes of the hour and of the people who inhabited it, prevented from being re-erected on the plan of its primitive magnificence.

It was there that Lasthénie, without companions of her age, without the games she might have shared with them, separated from all things by the grief and forbidding piety of her mother, passed the long hours of her joyless childhood. It may be that the emptiness of that immense stairway made her

The Story Without a Name

feel more keenly the other emptiness of an existence which a mother's love should have filled; and it may be—like those predestined to misfortune who torment themselves while awaiting the torment to come—it may be that the girl loved to mingle the weariness of that spacious stairway with the weariness of her empty youth.

Generally speaking, Mme. de Ferjol left her room in the morning and did not return until night, a circumstance which might have led her to fancy that Lasthénie was amusing herself in the garden; whereas, in reality, the child sat hour after hour, forgotten on the dumb, sonorous stair.

A hand on her cheek, the elbow on her knee, in that attitude which the genius of Albert Dürer gave to the figure of Melancholy, she sat congealing in the

The Story Without a Name

stupor of dream as though in a vision she had seen her Destiny ascend and re-descend those terrible stairs.

Surely if places have an influence, then this gloomy mansion—which looked like an immense bat that had fallen with wings outstretched at the foot of the mountains against which it lay—must have added a shadow of its own to the other shadows from which the immaculate forehead of the girl emerged.

In so far as Mme. de Ferjol was concerned her own melancholy could not have been increased. The influence of the place could not affect a bronze oxidized by grief. After the death of her husband, who had always lived largely and well, she plunged into religion to cool her heart. Every trace of luxury disappeared. The horses and carriages

The Story Without a Name

were sold, the servants dismissed—all, in fact, save one, Agathe, who had grown old in her service, and who had come with her from Normandy.

This change gave the gossips of the village something to cackle over. Mme. de Ferjol was accused of avarice. But presently the accusation fell of itself. The good that she did for the poor, though done secretly, became known, and at last, little by little, there came to the gossips a confused understanding of the beneficence and good qualities which this gentlewoman, who had withdrawn into retirement and the dignity of grief, really possessed. At church—and she was seldom seen elsewhere—a respectful curiosity surrounded her; and there, majestic in appearance, garmented in long, black robes, motionless, among the tumbling arches and squat

The Story Without a Name

pillars of the rough Romanic edifice, she looked as might some former Merovingian queen that had issued from the tomb.

And, after a fashion of her own, she was a sort of queen. She reigned unconsciously, without even wishing to, over the entire hamlet, which was not, it is true, a kingdom. But at least she reigned; and if, unlike the former kings of Persia, she was not invisible to her subjects, she resembled them by the distance she put between herself and the little world in which she lived, but with which she had nothing in common.

Easter that year was in April, and the Saturday preceding it happened to be one of those workdays which in the provinces are almost solemn. A year's linen had to be laundered. Since dawn,

The Story Without a Name

Agathe and a washerwoman had been hard at work. The garden paths behind the house were draped with sheets and napkins that floated, swollen by the breeze. As they dried they were carried into the dining-room and there left in heaps for the Ladies of Ferjol, when they returned from mass, to fold and arrange. That was a thing which no one else was permitted to do. Mme. de Ferjol took a real Norman pleasure in linen, one that her daughter shared; and, long before, she had begun on the superb trousseau which she was to give to Lasthénie on her bridal-day.

So soon therefore as they reached home they immediately sought the dining-room, and at the table, one in front of the other, they set their aristocratic hands to work. And as they worked

The Story Without a Name

Agathe appeared with a flood of dry linen, which she dropped before them like an avalanche.

“St. Agathe!” she cried—an expression of hers, the name of her patron saint—“there’s a lot for you! White, isn’t it? And dry! And it smells good, too. More than both Madame and Mademoiselle can fold before dinner. But there! the dinner to-day can wait. Neither of you is ever hungry, and the Capuchin has gone. Yes, indeed, and for good. That’s the way these Capuchins go, without so much as a word to those that have lodged them.”

Old Agathe, who had been young once, and handsome too, had accompanied her passionate mistress at the time of her scandalous elopement, and it was just that, together with having nursed Mlle. de Ferjol and remained in

The Story Without a Name

what she called a marmot's hole, which gave her the right to speak freely.

“Why, Agathe,” said Mme. de Ferjol, severely, “what do you mean? Father Riculf gone! Don't you know that this is Good Saturday, and that at vespers to-morrow he is to preach on the Resurrection?”

Agathe was an old maid, and by the Norman accent which she had never lost, the Norman bonnet which she still wore, you could see that she was obstinate.

“I can't help it—I know what I am talking about,” she answered. “The beadle came asking for him this morning; there was a crowd at his confessional awaiting absolution for the communion to-morrow. But I couldn't give him to the beadle, could I? At day-break I met him on the stairs, he had

The Story Without a Name

his hood over his head, and in his hand was the staff which usually he leaves behind his bedroom door. He passed me straight as an I, without a word, his eyes lowered, and my opinion is his eyes are worse when they are lowered than when they are not. I knew he couldn't have taken his staff to go to mass, a step from here, so I followed on his heels, to see where he was going. Well, he took the highway at the foot of Big Calvary, and I can tell you, if he has kept up the same gait, he is far away now, he and his sandals."

"It is impossible!" Mme. de Ferjol exclaimed. "He cannot have gone."

"Like the smoke of my kitchen," Agathe insisted, "and with as little noise."

And it was true. He had really gone. But the fact of the matter, which none

The Story Without a Name

of them knew, was this, that Capuchins always depart in that fashion. They go as death and Christ come—like thieves. You enter their room some morning, and they have evaporated. It is their custom and their poetry. Chateaubriand, who knew what poetry is, says of them: “The next day they were sought, but they had vanished like the holy apparitions that sometimes visit the heart and home of man.”

At that time neither Chateaubriand nor his *Génie du Christianisme* existed; moreover the previous guests of the Ladies de Ferjol had been both less poetic and less severe; outside of the church they were men of the world, incapable of leaving a host without some courteous word of thanks and appreciation.

But the Ladies de Ferjol cared too

The Story Without a Name

little for the Capuchin to be annoyed, as Agathe was, by the silent abruptness of his departure. He had gone, had he? Well, let him go. During the time that he had been with them he disappointed them more than he had pleased. Such were their thoughts. But Agathe felt more deeply. To her, Father Riculf represented that inexplicable thing which is called Antipathy.

“We are well rid of him,” she muttered; then, correcting herself, she added: “It may be wrong of me to speak of a man of God like that, but, all the same, I can’t help it; I have a poor opinion of him. And think of the difference between him and the others that have been here, pleasant all of them, apostolic and indulgent! There was that Prior, don’t you remember, madame? He was here two years ago.

The Story Without a Name

How nice he was! All in white, like a bride, even to his shoes. Father Riculf resembles him as a wolf resembles a lamb."

"You should not judge anyone," said Mme. de Ferjol, gravely. It was for her conscience sake, no doubt, that she spoke in this way, and perhaps also she reproached herself for the same thing which she blamed in her servant. "Father Riculf is a priest whose eloquence and faith are incontestable. Since he has been here he has not said or done a single thing that anyone could find fault with. You have no right, Agathe, to think ill of him. Has she, Lasthénie?"

"No, mamma," Lasthénie's pure voice replied. "But don't scold her. You and I have often said that there was something perplexing about him, some-

The Story Without a Name

thing that we could not define. Why was it? We have not thought ill of him perhaps, but we did not trust him. You would not confess to him any more than I would."

"And we have both been wrong perhaps," Mme. de Ferjol replied. "We might both have done better. In refusing for groundless reasons to kneel at his feet we condemned him in our hearts, a thing that we had no right to do."

"Ah!" the young girl naïvely exclaimed, "as for me I never could. He impressed me with a dread that I could not overcome."

"He talked of nothing but hell. Always it was on the tip of his tongue," panted Agathe, as though trying to justify the fear which the young girl expressed. "No one has ever talked so

The Story Without a Name

much about it. He damned us all. I knew a priest years ago in Normandy; they called him Father Love, because he only preached of paradise and the love of God. Father Riculf will never be known by that name."

"There!" said Mme. de Ferjol, who wished the conversation to end because it was uncharitable—"there! be quiet! If Father Riculf were to come in now—for I cannot believe that on the eve of Easter he can have gone away—he would find us gossiping about him, which is not right. As for you, Agathe, since you think he is not here, go up to his room; you may find his breviary somewhere, and that will show that he has not gone."

Agathe started on her errand at once. The two ladies said nothing further concerning the enigmatic Capuchin, of

The Story Without a Name

whom they knew little, and of whom they feared to think too much. Slowly they resumed the interrupted task.

It was a simple picture of home life that these two ladies presented. The room was vast and high-ceiled, about them were hillocks of white linen, which, as Agathe had said, smelled good, and exhaled the perfume of dew and of the hedges on which the linen had dried. The ladies were silent, but attentive to their work. Now and then, to fold a sheet rightly, they looked for the hem, each held a half and struck it with the hand. The hands of each were beautiful, and each had a particular beauty. Lasthénie, that lily of the valley, delicious in a dark-green gown that made her pale and melancholy face look like a flower in its leaves, and Mme. de Fer-

The Story Without a Name

jol, in her black gown and widow's cap, her hair whitened about the temples less by years than by grief—each had a beauty of her own.

Suddenly Agathe reappeared.

"He must have gone," she said. "I have looked everywhere and found but this, and whether he left it on purpose or forgot it when he went, I, for one, don't know."

And on the sheet which the ladies were folding she placed a heavy rosary such as Capuchins wear at the girdle. It was of ebony, and in the middle, to separate the black beads, was a death's head in yellow ivory, a color that made the head seem still more skull-like, and gave it the appearance of having been disinterred long ago.

Mme. de Ferjol stretched a hand,

The Story Without a Name

raised the rosary with respect, and, after examining it, put it down before her daughter.

But Lasthénie, as she picked it up, felt her fingers twitch, and dropped it.

“Keep it for yourself, mamma,” she murmured.

Instinct! Instinct! The flesh is sometimes wiser than the mind. Yet at that moment Lasthénie could not have told why her charming fingers had trembled.

As for Agathe, she afterward believed that the rosary which the hands of the terrible Capuchin had held, and on the beads of which he had left his influence, was like the gloves that are mentioned in the chronicles of the days of Catherine de Médici. She had never heard of them, of course, but she believed that the rosary was contagiously poisoned.

IV

BY midday it was evident that Agathe was right. The Capuchin had really gone. The crowd that waited about his confessional waited in vain; and when between vespers and evening service the village priest was obliged to replace him and preach the Resurrection in his stead, the entire hamlet considered it outrageous. But the impression which his abrupt departure caused did not last. After all, what does? The rain of days that drips drop by drop upon us carried it away, just as in autumn the rain disperses the leaves on which it falls. The monotony which he had interrupted returned, and

The Story Without a Name

presently the Ladies de Ferjol ceased to mention him. Whether they thought of him or not, who shall say? In this story without a name there are many obscurities. At the same time the impression which this man, once seen, produced, was unforgettable; the more so even because no one could explain why he could not be forgotten. The fact, however, remained. During the entire time that he had been the guest of these ladies, he had shown himself distant and respectful, and in his daily relations with them he had manifested both tact and breeding. But of himself never a word did he utter. Where was he born? What had his life been? How was he educated? These subjects Mme. de Ferjol touched upon, and like a true woman of the world ceased to touch upon when she saw that he was

The Story Without a Name

as marble is, cold, impenetrable, polished. She could see the Capuchin in him, and nothing else.

The Capuchins were no longer then what they had been. Their order, sublime in its Christian humility, had lost something of that sublimity. There were evil days ahead. The incredulous epicurism of the century had enervated creeds and customs. Orders renowned for their holiness no longer possessed that austerity which rendered them imposing even to the impious. In the town where Mme. de Ferjol danced her first contredances with the adorable baron, she remembered meeting a Capuchin whose beauty was so noticeable that it was impossible not to notice it, Capuchin though he were, and who, while he had come, as Father Riculf had, to officiate during Lent, exhibited

The Story Without a Name

in the garb of poverty and renunciation the affectations of a dandy. It was rumored that he was of noble birth, a fact which may have rendered a set of people who could be severe enough in their way, more or less indulgent to a scandalous Capuchin who perfumed his beard and who beneath his frock wore silk instead of haircloth. Mme. de Ferjol, at that time Mlle. d'Olonde, had met him in society, where he flirted in the corners with this woman and with that, and whispered to them behind the fan.

But though many a year since then had added to that general corruption which was to dissolve the solid bronze of France, and pour it like mire into the decanter of the Revolution, Father Ricalf in no wise resembled that love-making Capuchin. He exhaled none of the

The Story Without a Name

vices of the day. He seemed mediæval, like his name. The antipathy which he inspired in Mme. de Ferjol and in her daughter was without apparent cause.

Whether, after he had gone, they thought of him, it is difficult to say; and yet it is difficult to fancy that they did not. He was a mystery to them, and, of all things, mystery is the one which disturbs the imagination most. You who wish to be loved by those that love you, never let yourself be wholly known. Even in your kisses let there be a secret. While Father Riculf was the guest of the Ladies de Ferjol he was a mystery to them, but when he went he must have been a greater one yet. When he was with them they could fancy the moment would come in which the mystery would be explained, but once gone he remained indecipherably an enigma.

The Story Without a Name

And from beyond not a ray! To the Ladies de Ferjol no light was vouchsafed, even retrospectively, on the Capuchin who, of a morning, had left their life and house, as of an evening he entered it, without, when he came, mentioning whence he had come, or, when he went, mentioning whither he was going. It was like the text in the Bible: "Tell me whence he came, and I will tell you whither he has gone." But that they could not do; he had not told them. Presumably he belonged to some distant monastery, and wandered, like all of those of his calling, from one end of France to the other. In the villages adjacent to the hamlet that he had shaken with his eloquence no one had seen him. In the streets no one had turned to look at a man who could go nowhere without attracting attention—a man who in

The Story Without a Name

a tattered robe was magnificence itself, one who looked the very Emperor of Poverty. No doubt he had gone to some faraway land in order perhaps to be forgotten. And yet wheresoever he wandered he must have sown a profound remembrance of his passing, a remembrance which, by the expression he had, might readily become destructive.

Had he left such a memory anywhere? Apparently he was young, but there are hearts terribly old in beings that seem still youthful; and if up to that time he had left none elsewhere, was he to leave one in the soul of that poor Lasthénie de Ferjol, who trembled like a leaf before him, and to whom his departure brought a feeling of deliverance and relief?

To her he had always been what young girls who have antipathies call

The Story Without a Name

their "nightmare"; and if Lasthénie had not so called him it was because both in person and in speech she lacked the strength.

She was charming, yet fragile, possessing as it were the fatality of her weakness; and she was relieved at the departure of one who, without rhyme or reason, had impressed her like a loaded gun in a corner.

The gun was no longer there. She was glad of it, and yet in her face no sign of the joy of that deliverance was visible. For some little time there had come between her long eyebrows, ordinarily sad though placid, the furrow of inexplicable horror and unknown dread. Now and then the purity and melancholy of her forehead would suddenly contract into wrinkles. Mme. de Ferjol never noticed them. Agathe did.

The Story Without a Name

The latter's instinctive dislike of the Capuchin brought her a sagacity which the mother lacked. Had she been an Italian she would have believed in the evil eye; she would have thought of that mysterious *jettatura*, by which the passionate Italians, who believe only in love and hate, explain any misfortune which they do not understand. But Agathe was Norman, and the superstitions of her country were of a different kind. She believed in witchcraft, in invisible spells, and she suspected Father Riculf of being capable of casting one, and of having cast one on Lasthénie. Why on Lasthénie, who was sweetness and innocence personified? Precisely for that reason, just because she was sweet and innocent, because the demon who does evil for evil's sake, hates particularly innocence, and being a fallen

The Story Without a Name

angel, is jealous of those who remain in the light. To Agathe, Lasthénie was an angel who on earth had never ceased to inhabit the light of heaven.

It was under this idea of a “spell” that the old woman carried away the black rosary and its death’s head, which Lasthénie’s fingers had touched and shrunk from, and treated it like a holy relic that had been profaned. Fire purifies everything, and piously she burned it. But the “spell” which she imagined was still effective. It had come from hell, where everything is burning, and, like a burn that burrows and sears in the flesh, she fancied it burrowing and searing in Lasthénie’s soul. At the table, from behind Mme. de Ferjol’s chair, where she stood, a napkin in one hand, a plate in the other, she watched Lasthénie, who had

The Story Without a Name

ceased to eat, and whose face grew paler day by day.

The delicate beauty of the child had begun to fade. It was barely two months since Riculf had gone, yet the evil he had brought to the house was visibly at work. The diabolic seed which Agathe fancied he had sown was commencing to sprout. It was, however, by no means extraordinary that Lasthénie should seem melancholy. She had always been so. Born in a pit that Agathe detested, in a place where at high noon it was hardly daylight, and where she dwelt with a mother who thought only of the husband she had lost, and who never gave her a word of tenderness, why, Agathe reflected, without me that darling would have never smiled. Never would she have shown

The Story Without a Name

her pretty teeth. But it is not the blues that are affecting her, it is a spell, and a spell is death. Such were Agathe's ruminations.

“Are you suffering, mademoiselle?” she would ask, quaking with uneasiness she could not always hide; “are you suffering?”

And Lasthénie with her pale lips would always answer that she was not. It is a way young girls have, of denying that they suffer when they do. And Lasthénie evidently was suffering. Her eyes were hollow. The lily of the valley of her skin was bruised, and on her opal forehead the furrow between the brows was not that of a dream which passes; it expressed something more.

Her life, externally, had not changed; it was the same round of household duties, the same needlework in the em-

The Story Without a Name

brasure of the same window, the same visits with her mother to church, and the same walks with her along the mountain slope. These walks as a rule were taken late in the afternoon, and from the vesperal promenades the ladies rarely returned until they heard the Angelus rising under their feet and mounting toward them from the depths of the little valley where the black Romanic church crouched and sounded what Dante has called the agony of the dying day. They descended then into the enshadowed hamlet and sought the tomb-like church, where it was their custom, every evening, to pray before supper.

At times, when Mme. de Ferjol for one reason or another remained at home, Lasthénie would walk alone. There was no imprudence in that. The slopes

The Story Without a Name

were safe, and their safety came of their isolation. Strangers and vagabonds rarely passed through a hollow that was closed in on every side, and where, like a race of troglodytes, there dwelt a sedentary population, of whom many, enchanted by the somber enchantment of their prison, had never crossed the mountain walls. It was on the other side of the slopes that travelers passed, and, with them, the mendicants and prowlers of every kind whom it might be dangerous for a young girl to meet. But on the valley side there was no one to be feared. Besides, the Ladies de Ferjol were almost superstitiously respected. Lasthénie could have called by name each one of the little goatherds who guarded their charges in the aerial pasturages, each of the women who went at evening to the sloping meadows

The Story Without a Name

where the cows were milked, and each of the trout-fishers as well. She knew them all, and they knew her. Then, too, Mme. de Ferjol was seldom long separated from her daughter. She rejoined her the more easily because, knowing which way she was going, it was easy to see her afar, on some slope. For that matter, even from the windows of the gaunt gray house whose only perspective was the mountains before them, Lasthénie was generally in sight.

One evening Lasthénie returned earlier than usual, greatly fatigued and more changed than before. The change was not one which only a watchful observer would have noticed, it was a change that was haggard and hard, one that was visible to everyone. To Agathe, who indefatigably inquired how she was, she no longer denied that she

The Story Without a Name

suffered, only she could not explain what it was.

"I don't know what is the matter with me," she would say.

Her mother, lost as she was in her devotions and in the memories of her husband that devoured her life, thus far had noticed nothing. But that evening she did. Lasthénie, who was to have been met by her mother on the mountain - side after prayer, went to the church, unable to wait longer. When she entered, her mother was kneeling before the confessional, and she dropped on a bench behind her, worn out with fatigue.

The darkness of the church, dark at its brightest, was momentarily increasing. The windows gave no light. But when Mme. de Ferjol left the confes-

The Story Without a Name

sional it was not yet the hour for supper, and finding Lasthénie near her, she remarked that the morrow was a saint's day, and asked her why she did not then prepare herself, that they might partake of the communion together.

Lasthénie shook her head, she did not care to, and remained where she was while her mother prayed. She was utterly weary, and at the moment there had come to her that indifference that weariness brings.

The refusal to confess astonished Mme. de Ferjol, who, fearing to encounter a resistance which would have irritated her, did not insist. She accepted it as an added cross. Her annoyance, nevertheless, was extreme, for her will was as absolute as her faith, and as they left the church together and re-

The Story Without a Name

turned to their home, Lasthénie felt her mother's arm tremble with repressed emotion on her own. On the way, neither spoke.

At the corner of the square was a blacksmith, whose forge sent through the open door a tongue of flame; this they crossed, and Lasthénie was so white that that red light, which reddened the entire square, could not redder her pallor, at that moment extreme.

"How pale you are!" said Mme. de Ferjol; "what is the matter?"

Lasthénie answered that she was tired.

But when, as usual, they were seated opposite each other at the table, Mme. de Ferjol's black eyes became blacker as she scrutinized her daughter, and Lasthénie felt that her mother was angry at her refusal. She did not un-

The Story Without a Name

derstand, nor could she understand, that she had driven into her mother an impression that the latter was to find again like a nail, and on which she was to hang a terrible suspicion.

V

THE next day Mme. de Ferjol sent Agathe for the doctor.

“Ah!” the servant, with her customary frankness, exclaimed, “Madame sees then that Mademoiselle is ill. I could have told her so long ago, and would have, if Mademoiselle hadn’t forbidden me, and said she didn’t want to worry her mamma about an indisposition which would go of itself. But it has not gone all the same, and I shall be glad to see the doctor, although . . .”

She did not say all she might have, for, superstitious as she was, she did not believe that the doctor would be of much service. Nevertheless, she ran off for

The Story Without a Name

him at once, and presently he came. He questioned the girl, but gathered little from her answers. Mlle. de Ferjol said merely that she felt a weariness and disgust of all things.

“Even for God?” her mother bitterly threw at her.

It was a question she could not withhold, so annoyed was she at the girl’s refusal of the communion.

Lasthénie, who never complained, made no answer, but the question sounded in her ears like a prophetic threat of the future; she felt that her mother’s piety might one day become cruel.

Whether or not the physician understood what Mlle. de Ferjol’s condition was, he gave no hint to the mother. Any uneasiness he might have had he kept to himself, with the idea perhaps

The Story Without a Name

of waiting until the girl's vague symptoms became more pronounced; at the same time he spoke of the complications common enough in young girls of Lasthénie's age, and recommended for her care and diet rather than medicine..

"All that is bosh," sniffed Agathe. "Care and diet won't cure Mademoiselle."

And, as a fact, there was no improvement in the singular malady which seemed to consume her. She became more listless, and the nausea increased.

"So you want me to tell you what I think?" Agathe said to Mme. de Ferjol one day when they happened to be alone.

The dinner was over, and Lasthénie, to whom the sight of food was distressing, had gone to her room, that she might rest awhile on the bed.

The Story Without a Name

“Here is a whole month that the doctor has been coming, and for nothing. Three days ago he was here,” she continued, violently. “What I think is that Mademoiselle has more need of a priest to exorcise her than of a doctor who does no good.”

Mme. de Ferjol stared as though she fancied her suddenly attacked with madness.

But the immense eyes of the mistress did not in the least frighten the servant.

“Yes, madame, a priest who can undo the devilish work of that Capuchin.”

Mme. de Ferjol’s eyes flashed. “What? do you dare to——”

“Yes, madame,” Agathe intrepidly retorted, “I believe that Satan has passed this way, and that he has left what he leaves wherever he goes.

The Story Without a Name

When he can't damn the soul, it is the body he besets."

Mme. de Ferjol made no reply. She put her head in her hands and rested her elbows on the table, from which Agathe had already removed the cloth. She was as religious as her servant, much more so even, and what the woman had said pierced her heart like an arrow. In a moment she looked up: "Leave me alone for a while."

Then her frightened face sank again into her hands, and Agathe retreated, backwards, the better to judge the effect she had produced by the thunder of a single word.

Mme. de Ferjol was not superstitious, neither was she a mystic in the Christian sense of that term, but her faith was profound. What Agathe had said impressed her deeply. It was not that

The Story Without a Name

she would have denied the physical manifestations and visible influence of him whom the Holy Writ entitled the Evil Spirit. She believed in these things, calmly, doctrinally, in the exact measure that the Church, who is the mother of all prudence and the enemy of all frivolity, authorizes us to believe. Agathe's opinion impressed her therefore, but to a lesser degree than it would have impressed one whose imagination was more exalted than her own. It conveyed to her an idea of which Agathe had no inkling. The woman within her, one who after fifteen long years still yearned for the husband she had lost, revealed to her things which Agathe, in the celibacy of her heart and taciturnity of her senses, could hardly divine. Mme. de Ferjol believed, just as Agathe did, that Satan has in his

The Story Without a Name

service incarnations that are terrible; but by her own experience she knew what Agathe did not, that of them all, Love is the most terrible. And abruptly, in a lightning-flash, there came to her the thought that love was perhaps her daughter's disease. Her face was still in her hands, but her eyes—the eyes we all of us have to look down into the night of our souls—were fixed on that sudden thought. Yet, there being no decent society in the neighborhood, no attractive young men, and as she and her daughter passed the days in the solitude of an empty house, at once out of the night of her own soul surged the image of the incomprehensible Capuchin who had sprung into their lives and vanished.

As for the horror that Lasthénie had invariably exhibited for that frightful

The Story Without a Name

sphinx who for full forty days had dwelt impenetrably at her side, did it not show that she was not in love with him? Not at all. It showed, on the contrary, that she might love him madly. Women all know that. Even when their feminine instinct does not divine it, passion teaches. How often fear or hatred is the beginning of love! And what is horror but the union of fear and hate raised to their highest power?

“She feels toward you as she might to a spider,” said a mother one day to a man that loved her daughter. A month after that humiliating speech the poor mother was far from suspecting the culpable and hidden bliss with which the daughter let that spider suck from her heart its last drop of virgin blood.

Lasthénie had trembled before the mysterious Capuchin, but if a woman

The Story Without a Name

has not trembled before a man, never will she love him. Mme. de Ferjol herself had trembled at the irresistible white soldier who had carried her off as Boreas carried off Orythia. She had only to remember her past to fear for her daughter's future.

"If Lasthénie knows what is the matter with her," she reflected, "she hides it."

The mother recalled that when she had loved she too had hidden it. For love readily turns to falsehood; it is voluptuous to glue to a burning face a mask that will devour it, and which shows, when it drops, the scar that nothing can hide.

When Mme. de Ferjol looked up again she was calm, but she was determined to know the cause of her daughter's

The Story Without a Name

illness. To the doctor she gave no further thought. It was for her to discover. Once more she accused herself of her life's sin, that of being always more wife than mother. God continued to punish her; and that, she reflected, she deserved. Later, when Lasthénie returned from her room and took her seat in the embrasure of the window where both of them sewed, she would have been frightened had she seen her mother's eyes; but she did not see. There was never any tenderness there to attract her own, and so she did not seek them.

After a momentary silence, Mme. de Ferjol, who was mending some linen, looked up.

“How do you feel?”

Lasthénie bent over her work. “Bet-

The Story Without a Name

ter," she answered; but from her eyes there fell, perpendicularly and without touching the cheek, two heavy tears.

Mme. de Ferjol, her needle in the air, watched them fall, and she saw two others fall, larger and heavier than the first.

"Then what are you crying about? for you are crying," the mother asked, in a voice that was both a reproach and an accusation.

Lasthénie dried her eyes with the back of her hand. She was pale as a ghost.

"I don't know, mamma; it is physical, I think."

"I too think it is physical," Mme. de Ferjol replied, laying stress on each word. "Why should you cry? Why are you so miserable? Why are you unhappy?"

The Story Without a Name

The burning black eyes of the mother, transfixing the fair, wet eyes of the girl, dried them at once.

Lasthénie absorbed her tears. The two needles went to work. Again there was silence. The scene was short but threatening. They had both leaned over the edge of that abyss—lack of confidence—which separated them, and they said nothing more that day.

Silence became permanent between them; and what is there sadder, more sinister even, than the intimacy of two people who have ceased to speak?

In spite of her resolutions, Mme. de Ferjol, who feared to *know*, did nothing, and several dumb days passed. But finally, one sleepless night, in thinking of the silence that bowed them one in front of the other, oppressing both with an uneasiness which in itself was fright,

The Story Without a Name

Mme. de Ferjol became ashamed of her weakness.

“If she is a coward,” she cried, “so be it! I am not.”

She rose from the bed and took a lamp which burned all night in order that when sleepless she might see the crucifix that hung in her alcove and pray with greater fervor. Only now, instead of praying to it, she tore it violently from the wall, and took it with her as a supreme resource against the malediction she was going to seek, and which she was going to find. It was needful to her to end at once the insupportable anxiety that beset her, and, all in white, like a specter, she entered her daughter’s room, the crucifix in one hand, the lamp in the other.

She was fright itself, yet fortunately there was no one there to frighten.

The Story Without a Name

Lasthénie scarcely seemed to breathe; she had sunk into a dreamless sleep, that inanimate slumber which is like unto death, and which at night overtakes those who during the day have suffered greatly. Mme. de Ferjol held the lamp above her head and let the trembling light fall from her trembling hand. Then lowering it she held it close to the sleeping child whose secret she sought to discover.

Then at once she cried in horror: "I was right; I see it in her face."

A cry, parenthetically, which Lasthénie did not hear, and which if she had she would not have understood.

"Yes," she continued, "I see it."

Putting the lamp on the table, with one quick movement she lifted the crucifix over the face of the girl and held it as she might have held a hammer with

The Story Without a Name

which she intended to crush what was there. For a second only she held it so. Instead of falling on the sleeping girl she turned the crucifix and struck herself, violently, with the frenzied desire to inflict on herself a ferocious and fanatic punishment. The force of the blow was such that the blood spouted, and the noise of it awoke Lasthénie, who, seeing the light, the blood that flowed, and that mother of hers striking herself with a cross, cried out in terror.

“Ah! you cry out now, do you!” Mme. de Ferjol with brutal irony exclaimed. “You did not cry out when——”

She stopped, fearful of what she was about to say, hesitating at what she thought. But in a moment she found new courage.

“Hypocrite! You knew how to be quiet, to hide everything, to cover it all

The Story Without a Name

up. You did not cry out, but your sin now cries out in your face, and everyone will hear it as I do. You did not know that there is a sign which tells all and never deceives, an accusing sign, and that you have it!"

Lasthénie, startled and terrified, understood nothing of what her mother said, and at the sight of the horrible vision she might have gone mad perhaps, had not a swoon protected her. But, pitiless for the swoon of which she was the cause, the implacable mother abandoned her daughter fainting on the bed, and, falling on her knees, the crucifix in her upraised hands, she prayed aloud, kissing the crucifix as she prayed, and tearing her lips with its nails.

"My God, forgive me! Forgive me her sin, which I share, for I have not watched her enough. Like the ungrate-

The Story Without a Name

ful disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane I have fallen asleep, and the traitor came while I was sleeping. Let my blood, O Lord, be the expiation of her sin and of mine."

She struck herself again, on the breast, on the forehead, and the blood gushed forth.

"Let your Cross be the means of my torture, Lord God of Mercy."

Sinking, she fell, overwhelmed at her sin and at the fear of eternal damnation.

VI

WHEN Lasthénie recovered consciousness, her mother was lying on the floor, her face glued to the crucifix. The movement the girl made, the moan which she uttered in coming to, aroused the mother from her prostration, and drawing herself up to her full height, she towered over her daughter, her forehead still bleeding.

“You shall tell me all,” she declared, imperiously. “I insist on knowing. Tell me, and at once, to whom, in this solitude where we live—live like recluses—and where there is not a man of your station—to whom have you given yourself?”

The Story Without a Name

Again Lasthénie moaned; yet, too weak to answer, she stared, haggardly, with the stupidity of astonishment.

“There! I have had enough of comedy, enough of your silence, enough of your lies. Don’t pretend that you do not understand me, for you do,” continued the mother, who was no longer a mother, but a judge, and a judge prepared to become an executioner.

Insulted in her modesty and innocence, revolting at so much cruelty and blind injustice, the poor girl sobbed in agony.

“Mother, mother,” she implored, “what is it you wish me to say? What are you angry at? What have I done? I don’t understand at all what you mean except that it is something dreadful. You are killing me; I shall lose my

The Story Without a Name

senses; and with your horrible expressions and your bleeding forehead, you seem to have lost them yourself."

Violently, with the back of her hand, Mme. de Ferjol wiped her forehead.

"Let it bleed," she interrupted. "If it bleeds, it is for you, ungrateful child. But don't tell me that you don't understand. It is a lie. You know well enough what is the matter with you. All women do; merely on seeing each other they know. I am not a bit surprised that you refused to confess the other night."

At last the enervated girl grasped the full portent and infamy of the accusation.

"Mother," she moaned, "you know what you say is impossible. I am ill, I am suffering, but my illness is not

The Story Without a Name

caused by the horrible thing you imagine. I see no one but you and Agathe; I never leave you."

"You go to walk alone on the mountain," Mme. de Ferjol, with a look of atrocious penetration, insinuated.

In the degradation of such a suspicion Lasthénie clasped her hands. "Mother, you kill me. Angels of heaven, be merciful to me! You at least know what I am!"

"Don't invoke the angels; you have driven them away; they no longer hear you," said Mme. de Ferjol, blindly incredulous of the innocence which proclaimed itself with such despairing candor. Continuing more violently than before: "Don't add sacrilege to your falsehood," she cried; and brutally added: "You are lost, you are dishonored; deny it or not, it is the same in

The Story Without a Name

the end; you are dishonored, you are lost. But by whom? Tell me at once who it is. Who is it? Who is it?" she repeated; and seizing the girl by the shoulder she shook her so cruelly that she threw her back on the pillow. There the poor child lay, whiter than the pillow itself.

She had fainted again, but Mme. de Ferjol was as unmoved by the second swoon as by the first. She had asked God's forgiveness for her daughter's sin and her own lack of vigilance, and in her anger was capable of trampling the girl under her feet.

Seated at the bedside of the child whom twice she had turned into a corpse, she let her recover her senses as best she might. The pride which religion had not conquered rebelled in her heart at the insupportable idea that

The Story Without a Name

a man, an unknown, one of the lower classes no doubt, had clandestinely dishonored her daughter. The name of that man she wanted.

When Lasthénie opened her eyes, she saw her mother bending over her as though she were seeking that name on her lips.

“His name, his name!” she called, her eyes flashing with a devouring glare. “Ah, hypocrite! I’ll tear that accursed name from you if I have to dig it, with your child, from your entrails.”

But Lasthénie, overwhelmed by all the abominations of the night, instead of answering her mother, gazed at her through two big, empty eyes that seemed to be dead.

And they were dead, those beautiful eyes and so remained forever without a glimmer through the tears of which they

The Story Without a Name

shed torrents. Mme. de Ferjol learned nothing from her daughter that night, nor did she learn anything from her later on. But it was with that night for starting-point that they entered into the infernal life which thereafter they led, one that is without parallel in the somberest situations of tragedy. From that time it became really a story without a name, a drama, suffocating and suffocated, between two women of the same blood, who loved each other nevertheless, who had never been separated, but of whom, in the bonds of confidence, one had never been a mother, nor the other a child.

It was a drama soul to soul, deep-reaching, prolonged, mysterious, one in which the mystery had to be increased that Agathe might not know of the ignominy which Mme. de Ferjol was

The Story Without a Name

more anxious even than her daughter to hide; for at that time Lasthénie did not believe what her mother had said. In the novelty of her sensations she thought herself attacked by some unfamiliar complaint, that her symptoms were deceptive, that the error of her mother was monstrous, a thing to be rebelled against; yet, as she writhed beneath the insult, the dishonoring blow did not make her bend the head; hers was the sublime obstinacy of innocence; and because she did not resemble her mother who in her place would have roared like a lioness, she said to her, with the gentleness of a lamb that lets its throat be cut:

“Some day how sorry you will be to have made me suffer so!”

But the day of which she spoke never came. Yet many were the days that

The Story Without a Name

came to that pitiless mother who would not forgive, who never spoke of forgiving, and to that girl who staked her honor on remaining unforgiven. The days passed, long, despairful, black. Only there was one more despairful than the others, one that Lasthénie had not expected, one in which the interior shiver of the child, announcing its life, told her that it was she and not her mother who was wrong.

They were sitting as usual in front of each other in the embrasure of the window, devoured equally by the same dumb pain, their feverish hands at work. A ray of the sun entered like wind through a hole—that hole above them which the peaks of the mountains made—and in the gloomy room dropped on their necks a guillotine of light.

Suddenly, with an involuntary cry,

The Story Without a Name

Lasthénie put her hand to her side. At the cry, and still more at sight of the inexpressible desolation which swept over her face, already profoundly disconsolate, her mother, who seemed to read through her, instantly understood.

“You *felt it*, didn’t you?” she hissed. “You are sure at last. You won’t say no to me any more—that stupid no of yours. It is here, isn’t it?” and she placed her hand where Lasthénie had her own. “But who put it there? Tell me, I insist.”

With the eternal question once more she stabbed her daughter, and the latter, overcome now as with a lightning-stroke by the sudden revelation which showed her mother to be right, utterly undone by the certainty of her misfortune, shook her head wildly, and answered that she did not know; an in-

The Story Without a Name

excusable reply that angered her mother as nothing had angered her before.

Thus far Mme. de Ferjol had imagined it was shame that sealed her daughter's lips. But the shame had been drunk. There was no motive now for further concealment.

"If you won't tell me," she announced, measuredly, "it is because there is something more shameful than your own shamelessness—your shame of the man to whom you gave yourself."

The suspicion that had come to her before concerning the Capuchin returned, not as it had to Agathe, who believed in spells, but as it might to a woman like herself, who believed in the sorceries of love, and who had been a victim of them. But that suspicion of a crime which to her was the greatest of all, since a priest was the culprit, she

The Story Without a Name

put from her, but more out of respect for the character of the man of God than through any faith in the innocence of her daughter. Her own experience had taught her what a fragile thing virtue is. Yet, afraid in her frightened anxiety to utter the suspicion that tortured her, she began again with her eternal questions to massacre the despairful girl, already half killed by her incomprehensible condition. But in vain; Lasthénie made no other answer than that of silence and of tears.

Mme. de Ferjol was not a woman to be disarmed or outworned. Lasthénie's silence and tireless tears were interrupted with the indefatigable blows of questionings. Whenever they were alone the torture recommenced, and at present they were almost always alone. Their lifelong tête-à-tête became more

The Story Without a Name

absolute than it had ever been. The emptiness of their great house and the jostling mountains seemed to unite in an effort to bring them into stricter intimacy than before. Formerly, when Agathe had finished her work, she joined the Ladies de Ferjol in the room where they passed the monotonous routine of their existence. There she sat and knitted. But since Mme. de Ferjol had learned the secret of Lasthénie's disorder, she used the first pretext that came to her to keep Agathe out of the way. She feared her keen eyes, and she feared too the tears that her daughter could not stanch, and which flowed hour-long on her hands as she worked.

“For shame’s sake,” she admonished her once when the servant was not present, “don’t cry before Agathe. You are able to hold your tongue; you should

The Story Without a Name

be able to contain yourself. For all your dainty airs, you are strong enough. Your health may be poor, but vice has given you strength. I am only your mother; your sin I share, since I could not prevent you from committing it, but Agathe is a respectable woman, and if she merely suspected what I know she would despise you."

On that point she insisted constantly, and made use of a servant's scorn not only to humiliate Lasthénie still more, but through its repetition to force the girl to tell that name which she would not give. Mme. de Ferjol was well-versed in invective, and were it possible it would have gladdened her to find something lower than a servant's contempt to hurl in her daughter's face.

Agathe adored Lasthénie, and had the hideous truth been told her, there would

The Story Without a Name

have been no scorn in her heart. Scorn to the proud is what pity is to the lowly, and in Agathe's soul was a tenderness that years had not altered. Lasthénie was well aware of that.

"Agathe is not like my mother," she told herself; "she would not despise me, she would not reproach me; she would pity me."

And, in the misfortune that overwhelmed her, time and again she longed to throw herself in the arms of one who had been her nurse, the confidante of her childhood's griefs. But her mother prevented her. Mme. de Ferjol's ascendancy over her daughter had always been irresistible, but latterly it had become terrifying. When Agathe was present she medusa'd the girl with her eyes; and as for Agathe, when she looked over her spectacles at the two

The Story Without a Name

women who in their silent desolation sat facing each other, needle in hand, she did not dare to utter a word. Her opinion had not changed, but since Mme. de Ferjol had shrugged her shoulders at it, she kept it to herself. By way of explanation of the pallor, the fainting fits, and tears of the girl, whom the mother said was nervous, Mme. de Ferjol had invented a complaint of which the local physician, in his ignorance, understood nothing, but for which she had prescriptions sent her from Paris.

It was easier, after all, to keep Lasthénie out of the way of a physician who would have known what was the matter the moment he looked at her, than to separate her from Agathe.

But then, she reflected, was it possible to conceal Lasthénie's condition much longer? It was terrible enough

The Story Without a Name

as it was, but would not the symptoms become presently so marked that even Agathe, whose innocence made her blind, would see them? Mme. de Ferjol thought of these things, of others as well, and for the moment she wondered whether it might not be better to suppress Agathe, and, despite her affection and devotion, send her back to Normandy. In that event the very fact of dismissing Agathe would relieve her of any outward need of another servant. The neighbors were respectful indeed, but they were inquisitive and malicious. Once guarded against their gossip, she and her daughter could live alone in the servantless house like two souls in some pit of hell. That was her perspective. But the horrible problem that she constantly propounded was how she was to act later on. As yet she could form

The Story Without a Name

no decision. Though she never now spoke to her daughter, except to ask the eternal question which still remained unanswered, she too shrank from an avowal that dishonored the name that she bore so proudly, and to herself she kept repeating, "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

Day in, day out, at every moment, even while she prayed, Mme. de Ferjol put to herself that question. She thought of it at church, before the tabernacle, before the communion-table, which she had forsaken. Jansenist that she was, she believed that since her child's sin she had ceased to be worthy to approach it. At all times and places she was the prey of the problem and of the uncertainty which was eating her life. Her anxiety was such that it made her head swim, and that anxiety, joined

The Story Without a Name

to the inconsolable grief of her daughter's fall, made her treat the latter with an anger and a resentment that were well-nigh ferocious.

Yet still the greater sufferer was Lasthénie. Mme. de Ferjol was certainly most miserable. She suffered in her motherly and womanly pride, in her conscience, and even in that strength for which we pay atrociously high; for the psychologically strong have neither the relief nor the sedative of tears; their sobs are suffocated. Nevertheless she was a mother, injured and insulted, and Lasthénie was but her daughter, the object of her eternal reproach, the victim whom she crushed with the now undeniable evidence of a sin which she called a crime. In the abominable intimacy that existed between them, surely then it was Lasthénie who suf-

The Story Without a Name

fered most. In unhappiness there is a moment, similar to that which comes in happiness, when there is no longer a possible chronicle, when that which is untellable is left to the imagination to divine. To Lasthénie that moment had come. She was unrecognizably changed, to such a degree that those who had thought her charming would never have believed that this was what was left of the fair demoiselle de Ferjol.

She frightened, all lily of the valley that she was. The Rosalind of Shakspeare had gone, and with her the pallor she had had, and which is the beauty of tender hearts. She was but a sallow mummy, a strange mummy too, one that continually wept, and whose flesh, instead of withering, grew softer, bruised and rottened with tears. She suffered horribly, and it was pitiful to

The Story Without a Name

see her drag her weighted waist about. She would have hid it perpetually in the floating folds of her peignoir. But that her mother would not permit. She forced her to church, thinking no doubt that its influence would do her good, that it would be of benefit to her wicked heart, and force from it perhaps the secret that it held.

“You are not ill enough yet,” she would say, with scornful severity. “In God’s holy house you must ask His forgiveness.”

To take her there, it was she who dressed her, not Agathe. It was she who, as they left the house, wrapped her daughter’s head in a thick veil, to hide *what she had seen*, a veil so thick that the girl might have smothered in it, a veil that would have concealed leprosy itself. But it was not the face alone

The Story Without a Name

that had to be concealed; there was the waist, which would have told the story to the least observing; and to prevent that, she laced Lasthénie's corset herself, tightly, so that it hurt. Sometimes, under the pressure of her mother's hand, involuntarily the girl would groan, whereat the mother, exasperated at the obstinate silence which withheld that name, would hiss in her ear that those who sin must suffer.

"Perhaps you are afraid I will kill it," she said once, when the girl seemed to suffer from the lacing more than before. "You needn't; the children of crime are strong."

VII

IN the midst of these ferocities there came a moment when the mother, outraged indeed, but yet not wholly pitiless, stopped the torture she was inflicting on her child. It may be she felt that, however culpable the girl might be, she herself was going too far. It may be that she was touched at the sight of a face that had been delicious, but which was now but a faded flower; or, again, it may have been but a ruse on her part to surprise the secret which that fragile girl had the strength to keep hidden.

Mme. de Ferjol knew what love is. "She must love him madly," she de-

The Story Without a Name

cided; and she changed her tactics. The ferocity vanished; she became tender and motherly.

“Lasthénie, my child,” she said, one day, “listen to me; you are killing yourself with grief, and you are killing me; you are damning your own soul, and you are damning mine. Concealment is falsehood, and in the humiliating comedy I play to hide your shame I share that falsehood with you. A word from you would replace you, perhaps, in the arms of him whom you love. Tell me his name. Perhaps he is not so low but that you may marry him. Lasthénie, my dear Lasthénie, I am sorry I have been so hard with you. I had not the right to be so. I have never told of myself. You, like everyone else, know but one thing of me, that I adored your father and eloped with him; but

The Story Without a Name

you do not know, nor does anyone else, that I, like you, my poor child, was culpable and weak. When I was married I was in the same condition that you are. In the happiness of my marriage, the weakness was hid; I blushed at it, but to God alone. Your sin, perhaps, is the punishment and expiation of my own. God has terrible retaliations. I married your father; he was my divinity; but God is a jealous God. He will have no one preferred to Him, and He punished me in taking my husband away, and in making you repeat what I did. Now, why should you not marry the man you love?—for you do love him. If you did not adore him as I adored your father, you would not conceal his name."

She stopped. The effort to say what she had must have been immense, but

The Story Without a Name

she said it. She had not recoiled before the humiliation of admitting her parity to her daughter. It was her last resource, the ultimate hope of earning the secret she burned to know.

But the effort was futile. Lasthénie remained unmoved. Broken in spirit, outworn by useless denials, she listened to her mother, as she listened now to everything, without answering a word. To her mother's reproaches, to her objurgations and anger, she had become insensible as a corpse. The confession affected her as little as the abuse had done. Whether or not she remained silent because of her present inability to prove her innocence, who shall say? But one thing is certain, Mme. de Ferjol's sudden tenderness, the appealing confession which she had made, the endeavor to obtain the girl's confidence

The Story Without a Name

by means of an avowal which placed them both on the same footing, came too late. Besides, the girl's incomprehensible condition and the anguish of it had made her almost an idiot. For a long time she had believed that something else was the matter with her. She remembered the torture inflicted on an unfortunate girl in the neighborhood who was thought to be *enceinte*, and who remained, long after the natural time, *enceinte* with a horrible tumor. Lasthénie—and here is the tragedy of it all—Lasthénie had hoped for a tumor as she hoped for God.

“It will be my revenge,” she thought.

But that hope she had lost. She could doubt no longer. The child had moved within her, and in moving had awaked in her heart something which perhaps was maternal love.

The Story Without a Name

“Won’t you speak now, Lasthénie?” Mme. de Ferjol continued, caressingly. “Won’t you speak to me as freely as I have spoken to you? You should not be afraid of a mother who has been as weak as you; and who can save you,” she added, “in giving you to him whom you love.”

But even physically Lasthénie did not seem to hear. She was deaf; she was dumb. Her mother watched her, ready to inhale the answer that did not come.

“My little girl, do be good; tell me who it is.” Mme. de Ferjol took one of Lasthénie’s inert hands in her own and tried to draw her daughter to her. But that also must have come too late.

They were sitting then in the embrasure of the window where they always sat. The girdling mountains that shadowed the house increased the

The Story Without a Name

dreariness of the room, and against the brown oak that covered the walls Lasthénie was as white as a plaster medallion. Mme. de Ferjol bent sadly over her needle, but Lasthénie's work had fallen from her discouraged hands; she sat upright, motionless as a statue—a statue of infinite desolation. Her lovely eyes, once so fresh and pure, were ruined by tears. There were red circles about them which the burn of the tears had made and kept there; and the eyes themselves, which had begun to chafe as though it were blood that they had shed, expressed nothing, not even despair. Lasthénie was about to pass into something deeper than the abstraction of a lunatic, she was falling into the vacancy of idiocy.

With a pity into which terror mingled, the mother contemplated the disaster

The Story Without a Name

of her daughter's face. She had never told her she was pretty; the austerity of her creed prevented anything which might tend to exalt a personal pride; but at heart she had been glad of the girl's good-looks. Now, though her appearance broke her heart, she could see the hideousness of idiocy forming it, a death in life. Many believe that the body dies before the soul takes flight, but there are instances in which life remains long after the soul has departed.

Night overtook them where they sat.

"Come and pray God to unseal your heart and lips, and give you the strength to speak," said Mme. de Ferjol, at last.

Indifferent to God as to everything else, Lasthénie remained seated. Mme. de Ferjol was obliged to take her by the wrist, upon which, automatically, the girl yielded.

The Story Without a Name

Suddenly the mother raised the girl's hand. "What is this?" she cried. "Have you lost your father's ring, or do you think yourself no longer worthy to wear it?"

The misfortune that had overwhelmed these two women was so vast that neither of them had noticed that the ring was missing.

Lasthénie, who had ceased to understand anything, looked at her hand and stretched the fingers as a lunatic might have done.

"Have I lost it?" she murmured. She spoke as though she were issuing from a dream.

"Yes," answered Mme. de Ferjol, whose eyes had become black again and implacable—"yes, it is lost as you are. You gave it to him to whom you gave yourself."

The Story Without a Name

At once the tenderness vanished. The loss of her husband's ring seemed worse than the loss of her daughter's honor.

That evening and the day after Agathe searched for the ring everywhere. Lasthénie's hand had become so thin that it might easily have slipped from her unnoticed; but the ring was not found, a fact which prevented Mme. de Ferjol from again feeling the slightest compassion. From then on she became frankly cruel.

That evening the church was neglected. Had they gone there Mme. de Ferjol would have taken with her the suspicion that had haunted her at intervals, a suspicion which by reason of her daughter's invincible silence held her like a vise.

Since she will not tell me his name,

The Story Without a Name

she reflected, it is because she cannot marry him; and immediately the thought of that frightful Capuchin, whose name she would not have dared to utter to her daughter, nor even to herself, sprang at her. Even the letters of the name alarmed her, and to assemble those letters and pronounce them in a whisper seemed to her a sacrilege. For it was a sacrilege to think ill of a priest who, while he dwelled at her side had appeared irreproachable. That which made her tremble to think of, but of which she thought nevertheless, might have seemed possible to another, yet never to her.

“Dear Lord,” she cried, in her prayers, “let it not be he.”

Besides, she reasoned with herself, when could this crime against God and her daughter have been committed?

The Story Without a Name

He had never seen either of the two women in the absence of the other. He had turned his room into a cell, and save at meal-time never left it. It was absurd therefore to imagine what she did. And yet, in spite of its evident absurdity, the suspicion which she banished as a suggestion from hell returned always and more infernally insistent than before. It possessed her, hallucinating her with terrifying visions, and plunging her into silences as deep as those of Lasthénie; and did she by any chance turn for a moment from the absorbing abstraction of which she vainly prayed God to deliver her, at once there surged before her another vision, as powerful and imperious as the former, the vision of fleeting time!

It was fleeting indeed, pitilessly even, and presently it would tell the entire

The Story Without a Name

hamlet of the shame of the Ladies de Ferjol. There was but one thing left for them, to go away and disappear. Mme. de Ferjol saw no one, but one morning, as Agathe was on her way to market, she told her to say that all three were to return to Normandy. The prospect not only of leaving the hole in which for nineteen years she had suffocated, but of again feasting her eyes on her native pasture lands, was the one thing calculated to make Agathe a little less unhappy. Lasthénie's condition, which she still believed the work of the demon, had made her wild with grief, the more so because she felt there could be no remedy against it. But the good news cheered her a little. A change of air, Mme. de Ferjol said, had become necessary to Lasthénie, and what air could be better than that of Normandy?

The Story Without a Name

These explanations, which covered the real one, Agathe neither discussed nor examined; she accepted them with joy and confidence. She was homesick for her native land. But from her, as from everyone else, Mme. de Ferjol wished to guard her daughter's secret. For that matter it was her own as well. In her conscience she felt that Lasthénie's condition dishonored her as much as it did her child; and to conceal that dishonor there was nothing of which she had not thought save an act which, in the present state of our miserable lives, might readily be called the crime of the nineteenth century. Mme. de Ferjol was too upright, too religious, to consider even for a moment's space any of the forms of infanticide.

Save that, Mme. de Ferjol had knocked against every angle of the

The Story Without a Name

terrible question. Plan after plan she made and relinquished. She thought of losing herself and her daughter in the immensity of Paris, and she thought too of taking her to some foreign city. She was rich, and with money, everything, even to appearances, may be saved. But what excuse had she for going off with a sick daughter no one knew whither, and leaving behind an old and devoted servant, one who had accompanied her at the time of her scandalous elopement, and from whom, out of gratitude, she had then sworn never to part, happen what might?

Besides, the adoption of such a plan would certainly have made Agathe suspect the shame of a girl whom all her life she had believed an angel of innocence and purity; and that, Mme. de Ferjol wished at any cost to avoid. It

The Story Without a Name

was then the idea occurred to her of returning to Normandy. After twenty years of absence she felt that she must be entirely forgotten, that those whom she had known in her youth had either died or departed. Then, too, the plan had another advantage: Agathe would be too occupied with her recovered home to discover the secret which was to die between her daughter and herself.

The solitude to which she looked forward was of a different kind from that which the hamlet offered. In Normandy she would not live in either a city or a village, but in her own old Château d'Olonde, a castle situated in a corner of the unfrequented tract that lies between the Channel coast and the peninsula of Cotentin. At that time there was no highway there. The castle was protected by the wretchedness of

The Story Without a Name

the cross-roads, and, during a part of the year, by the southwest winds, which blew the rain upon it as on the home of some misanthrope built behind inaccessible by-paths. It was there, like moles, that these two Shames could hide.

Mme. de Ferjol had resolved that even on the fatal day no physician should be called. Her own hands would suffice, she told herself; and each time she did a shiver caught her, and from the depths of her heroic and miserable being a voice cried:

“But afterwards? What of the child? Must you not hide it too as you hide the mother?”

Then at once she would begin again at the problem which strangled her like a noose. But there was no time to be lost. It was impossible to wait any

The Story Without a Name

longer; there was but one thing to be done—to get away from the hamlet that stared in her face. Whereupon Mme. de Ferjol, with that feeling common to those who anticipate a calamity that they cannot avert, consoled herself as best she might in the hope that at the last moment something would occur to save her, and threw herself, with her daughter, into the postchaise that carried them off.

VIII

THIS nameless story of a mysterious domestic tragedy which fell, no one knew whence or how, on two women, who while hid in the shadow of a cistern were yet visible to the eye of Fate, occurred coincidentally with the formation of another shadow, one that mingled with and darkened the first—the shadow of the crater that suddenly opened beneath the feet of France.

When Mme. de Ferjol left her hamlet the French Revolution had begun, but it was not sufficiently advanced to interfere, as it would have later, with the journey she was taking. That journey was long and painful. Lasthénie

The Story Without a Name

suffered horribly. The roads were not then what they have since become, and the jolting postchaise tortured her so that every evening a stop was made at an inn, not for a relay, but for the night.

A hearse could not go slower, the postillions disdainfully remarked, and in so doing spoke better than they knew. The carriage they drove contained almost a corpse. At each lurch of the coach, Lasthénie was on the point of fainting, and that devil who lurks in ambuscade in the best and strongest hearts never failed on such occasions to inspire Mme. de Ferjol with a sinister hope.

“If only she would have a——”

But the woman’s piety strangled the hope even before it was fully expressed.

She was closer to her daughter there than in the embrasure of their window.

The Story Without a Name

Yet they spoke as little as before. What had they to talk of? Everything had been said. Absorbed in themselves neither thought of looking from the window. They had no curiosity in the landscape, in the passers, in anything. The long hours went by in a silence worse than reproach; they were pitiless to each other, atrocious, both of them, in their resentment. For they were embittered now, one at her inability to extract anything from the obstinate and stupid chill who was her own, and who sat there with her, knee to knee; the other at the injustice and cruelty of her mother.

The long journey across France was an agony to them both; to Agathe as well, for Lasthénie's sufferings made her suffer too. She had the same idea concerning her darling's disorder; it was

The Story Without a Name

not one for human remedies; exorcism alone could dissolve the spell; and she had said as much to Mme. de Ferjol, who, in spite of her profound faith, had shrugged her shoulders, a reply which to Agathe in her piety was incomprehensible. Once back in Olonde, however, she knew what she would do. Of all worships in Normandy, the most ancient is that of the Blissful Thomas de Bivelle, confessor of St. Louis the King. And Agathe intended to walk barefooted to the tomb of that holy man, who could easily add Lasthénie's recovery to the many other miracles he had worked. If then she were not cured, Agathe determined to ask a priest to exorcise the spell. For, in spite of her absolute devotion to the Baroness de Ferjol, and the familiarity with which she addressed her, Agathe was afraid of

The Story Without a Name

the imposing woman who closed her mouth with a word, sometimes with a sience; and she did not dare to presume to offer further advice.

At last, after many days, Olonde was reached. If anything could have acted on Lasthénie's dulled imagination it would have been the splendor and gaiety of the sunlight which fell upon her as she alighted from the coffin-like coach. Had her soul been left to her it would have been deliciously inundated by the brilliancy of a sky such as, from her mountain cave, she had never seen before. But she was too weak to appreciate the charm of that sudden douche of light. The sun that day gave to the leaves and the hedges—which the rain had brushed and the wind had polished—the glitter and sheen of emeralds. Normandy is the Erin of France, but an

The Story Without a Name

Erin rich, cultivated, worthy to bear the color of happy and realized hope; whereas the Erin of Great Britain has only the right to the livery of despair. Unfortunately, all this affected no one but Agathe. Mme. de Ferjol had broken the last tie that held her to earth. In leaving the tomb of her husband, in which she too expected to be placed, her one thought had been to save her daughter's name. To exterior impressions she was as unconscious as Lasthenie.

They had both become in every sense unnatural; they knew it and it terrified them. They loved each other still, but an involuntary hatred had begun to filter venomously into that love, corrupting and embittering it as a poison corrupts a well.

It was with these sentiments, and

The Story Without a Name

with the indifference of people to whom life has nothing to offer, that they established themselves in their refuge, the abandoned Château d'Olonde, which they had reached without notifying anyone, and where they wished to remain unknown. Unassisted, Agathe made the old castle almost habitable for them. Rejuvenated by the enchanted oxygen of her natal land she sufficed unto herself, and spared them the slightest trouble. The shutters she left tightly closed, but to air the musty halls and chambers she opened the windows behind them. She dusted and she rubbed the furniture, which cracked with the weight of age; from the closets she took the piled and yellowed linen; she made the beds and heated them, delivering them from that sepulchral impression which old linen that has lain long un-

The Story Without a Name

aired exhales. In spite of the three people who had come there, exteriorly the castle was unchanged. To the peasants who passed it, and who paid no more attention to it than if it had never existed, it was empty still. They had always seen it there; with its barred shutters they were familiar; the excommunicated appearance which it possessed had ceased to impress them; and when they passed that way they give no heed to the singularity of a castle inhabited by a silence that resembled death.

The tenant-farmers of Olonde lived too far from the castle to be aware of what was happening there. Agathe was forty years old when she disappeared with her mistress, and the twenty years of her absence had changed her appearance so completely that there was no

The Story Without a Name

one in the market-place to recognize her. To the peasants she was merely an old woman of their own class, who paid cash and held her tongue. The Normans are taciturn, and so distrustful that they make no advances until advances are made to them. They attend to their own business and not to the affairs of others. As a consequence Agathe was not embarrassed by any inquisitive curiosity. The roads that led to the castle were rarely used, for the castle itself was beyond the highways that led to the villages of Dennevile and St. Germain-sur-Ay. The entrance to it was a great rusted gate, provided with an interior shutter that cut off any view of the court; but beyond the castle, in an angle of the garden wall, was a little low door, and it was that which Agathe used when she went to market. On returning, and

The Story Without a Name

before putting the key in the lock, she looked around carefully like a thief. Her precautions were needless; there was never anyone about.

In accordance with her intention, Mme. de Ferjol created there a greater solitude than the one she had left, one that was not solitude alone, but captivity as well, but against which Lasthénie made no effort at revolt. The idea of honor, as the world accepts it, occupied much less space in her virginal and weakened mind than in that of her mother, but always she had been obedient, and now she was too wholly demoralized to complain. Agathe, in her fanatic love for the young girl, whom she never could have suspected of a purity that was not immaculate, was not at all surprised at this mysterious and

The Story Without a Name

prodigious isolation. It seemed very natural that Mme. de Ferjol should be unwilling to have anyone see what a ruin Lasthénie was, or to have anyone say, That is what the noble Demoiselle d'Olonde has brought back from her scandalous elopement. Meanwhile she busied herself with her plan of a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Blissful Thomas of Bivelle, and of the exorcism which was to follow, if her prayers were unanswered. Mme. de Ferjol was therefore unhindered by her daughter or by Agathe, without whose aid indeed she could not have created the cloister that she had. For Olonde was a cloister, but without chapel or services, a thing that added to Mme. de Ferjol's remorse. Even veiled she could not have gone to mass in the neighboring

The Story Without a Name

parish, for at that particular time it was dangerous to leave Lasthénie alone for a minute.

“I must sacrifice to her,” she resentfully reflected, “even the duties of religion”—duties that were weightier to that Jansenist than to anyone. “She damns us both.”

This intensity in religion it is necessary to understand in order to appreciate what the woman suffered, for she did suffer, and acutely. The castle, which I have compared to a nunless and chapel-less cloister, soon became to Lasthénie and herself as suffocating as the post-chaise, which had affected them like a coffin. Happily—if such a word can be used in a story like this—happily, about the castle there was space enough to breathe in. The walls of the uncultivated garden were sufficiently high to

The Story Without a Name

conceal the two recluses when they cared to take a few steps in the open air.

Soon, however, Lasthénie left the garden to itself. She preferred to lie on the lounge, which her mother occupied at night. For, like a jailer—worse even, for in prison the jailer is not always present—Mme. de Ferjol never left her side. Lasthénie lived with hers, a jailor tenaciously silent now, but omnipresent and implacable. Mme. de Ferjol had adopted an attitude which gives some idea of the strength of her character. She said nothing to Lasthénie; she no longer reproached her. She understood at last the impossibility of conquering a girl who was at once so weak and so firm, and that firmness was an example to her. The silence, which between them had always more or less ex-

The Story Without a Name

isted, at this time became absolute. It was the silence of two corpses in the same bier, but of two corpses that were not dead, who, within the four dumb planks of a coffin, saw and touched each other. The funeral silence was the most insupportable of all the things they underwent.

Prayer is not, as St. Martin has said, the breath of the soul. The soul's breath is untrammelled speech, the full expression of a thought, whether of love or of hate, of prayer or blasphemy, of cursing or benediction. Whoso is condemned to silence is condemned to be suffocated and yet not to die. It was to that which these women in their despair had condemned themselves. To each the silence of the other was death. Mme. de Ferjol, whose faith nothing

The Story Without a Name

could alter, still spoke to God. She threw herself on her knees before her daughter and prayed to Him in imploring undertones. But Lasthénie addressed God as seldom as she addressed her mother, and smiled even—an evil smile, one that was vaguely scornful—at the sight of her mother kneeling in prayer at her side. The injustice of her mother had taken from her all belief in the justice of God.

Agathe, whom Mme. de Ferjol kept at arm's length, did not dare to come with her work into that room where no one spoke; and, although beside herself with anxiety because of Lasthénie, she was glad nevertheless to resume possession of the places and things she knew so well, and she busied herself with the household duties which her mistress

The Story Without a Name

seemed to have entirely forgotten. Without Agathe, who fed them as infants and lunatics are fed, they would have perhaps both died of hunger absorbed in devouring thoughts.

IX

ONE evening Mme. de Ferjol noticed certain symptoms that foretokened an early deliverance, and though the crisis had been long awaited, its attendant dangers alarmed her as they had not done before. They were solemn and menacing, and her untrained hands might easily render them tragic and mortal.

By force of will she mastered her nervousness and prepared for the task. Lasthénie's sufferings left no room for doubt. During the night she was delivered. A little before, her mother muttered:

“Bite the sheets so as not to cry out; try to have that courage.”

The Story Without a Name

Lasthénie had it: she did not utter a single cry; and even if she had it would have disturbed no one in that house, to which night could not add a silence greater than it possessed by day. The only person who might have heard was Agathe, but she occupied a room at the other end of the castle, a precaution which Mme. de Ferjol's prudence had long since devised. Nevertheless, in spite of everything, during one moment the fear that comes of uncertainty beset her. She was sure she was alone with her daughter, and yet with beating heart she crept and opened the door. She fancied Agathe crouching there. Such a thing was absurd; but no matter, she opened the door with that sinking of the heart which visits those who are not sure whether a specter may not surge out of the gaping black of night. In her case

The Story Without a Name

the specter would have been Agathe. Trembling, her eyes dilated, she peered down through the shadows of the corridor; there was no one; and trembling still she returned to the bed where her daughter writhed in agony.

The infant must have been exhausted by the sufferings of its mother. It was stillborn. Mme. de Ferjol, who had reproached herself for hoping for a certain accident which the jolting vehicle might have caused, and thereby saved her daughter's future, could not help being glad at a death for which no one was to blame. She thanked God for the loss of a child whom in thought she had lugubriously christened Tristan; she blessed providence for taking it from her before its birth. She and her daughter too were spared new shames and fresher griefs. For to her also it was a deliv-

The Story Without a Name

erance. Death had freed her from a child whom she would have had to hide during its lifetime as she had hid it in its mother, and who, living, would have impurpled Lasthénie with that blush of shame which bastards put on their mother's cheeks.

“There is your crime and its expiation!”

Lasthénie looked at the child with eyes that were as dead as it, while through her broken body a shiver passed.

“It is happier than I am,” she murmured.

Mme. de Ferjol was watching her face, searching for a look of tenderness, which it astonished her not to find. There was horror there, the eternal horror to which fate seemed to have dedicated the girl, but nothing of that which

The Story Without a Name

explains and absolves, no trace of love, nor yet of maternal affection. Involuntarily Mme. de Ferjol had counted on that supreme moment, but she had counted in vain; the mystery of Lasthénie's soul was impenetrable. At that hour there were certainly many women in the world giving birth to the fruit of illegitimate love, but was there one, was there *another*, whose destiny resembled Lasthénie's? one on whom night and fear and death piled a triple shadow, in order that a nameless child of some nameless story might be forever hid?

It was a night of agonies, and there was still another to be endured; the child happily was dead, but its body was there, and that last vestige of shame Mme. de Ferjol knew must disappear.

Lasthénie had fallen asleep. Mme. de Ferjol took the corpse, and, rolling

The Story Without a Name

it in one of the swaddling-clothes at which she had worked during the silent hours she had passed at her daughter's side, she left the girl and the room, locking the door behind her as she went. Presently she was in the garden; an old spade was there, she remembered, and with it, in an angle of the wall, she dug a grave for the child, hurriedly, her hands trembling and humiliated.

"I bury it as though I had killed it," she thought; and with the fright of guilt she stamped down the earth on what might have been her grandchild. Then she returned to the room, where Las-thénie still slept.

When the latter awoke she asked no question. She appeared to have forgotten the child. Mme. de Ferjol noticed this, and waited, wondering whether she would speak of it first. But, mon-

The Story Without a Name

strous as it may seem, she neither spoke of it then or later on. Only her tears flowed continuously, as before, and when at last she was sufficiently recovered to leave her bed, she seemed as ill as she had been at first. There was the same weakness, the same pallor, the same stupor, the same self-concentration, the same frightened expression, the same dementia. The dishonoring blow which her mother had dealt at her innocence, joined to the inexplicability of her condition, had put a wound in her that still bled, one that would never heal.

Mme. de Ferjol, reassured by the knowledge that the secret of her daughter's dishonor was now a thing of the past, became gentler, and, being a Christian, charitable and lenient too. Her customary irritability disappeared. The irreparable was to her like

The Story Without a Name

death, a thing to be accepted. But with Lasthénie it was different. She declined to accept the irreparable. Of the two women it was the weaker who showed the greater strength. Her relations with her mother she did not alter, neither did she raise her head. She was pitiless. That dagger which resentment is she kept in the wound it had created.

Agathe, who during the time the girl was in bed had hoped for some favorable change in her disorder, seeing now, by her languor and unceasing tears, that the prospect of amelioration was slight, returned to her former belief in the devil and his spells, and asked permission to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Blissful Thomas de Bivelle, a permission which Mme. de Ferjol accorded.

Agathe started off barefoot, with that

The Story Without a Name

faith of mediæval pilgrims which, in spite of the progress of contemporaneous incredulity, still abides in Normandy.

Four days later she returned, but sadder than when she started. The miracle that she had demanded in the security of her perfect faith seemed to her now remote, perhaps unobtainable. For, on approaching Olonde, there in the moonlight she had found a coffin stretched across the road. She had tried to move it, and could not, and suddenly it had disappeared. In the superstitions of the land, in which she firmly believed, an experience such as that was an evil omen, the presage of coming death.

The next day, however, Lasthénie seemed to her a trifle better than before, and had it not been for the apparition

The Story Without a Name

she would have attributed the slight amelioration to the pilgrimage. She told Mme. de Ferjol all the circumstances of her journey, but said nothing about the coffin.

“What is the use?” she reflected.
“She would not believe me.”

But Mme. de Ferjol did believe in prayer, and in the miracles which prayers produce, and she told Agathe that Lasthénie already felt better for those that had been offered for her at the tomb of the saint.

“I intend to go to mass myself presently,” she added.

Now, Agathe had not missed one, and she had excited no more curiosity in the church than she had in the market-place. To the assistants she was but one peasant more. But what was pos-

The Story Without a Name

sible to Agathe was impossible for her mistress.

So soon then as Mme. de Ferjol felt that the time had come when she could attend holy worship, she experienced a sensation, not of joy, for the condition of her daughter made her far too melancholy for that, but of something that dilated her heart, so long and so horribly compressed. In the native common-sense which had never deserted her, and in her appreciation of the realities of life, she knew that *now* she and her daughter must abandon the incognito which thus far they had preserved. In consequence she gave Agathe certain instructions. She told her to tell the tenantry of her arrival, to explain that she had come because of her daughter's health, to whom a change of air

The Story Without a Name

was necessary, and to add that until her daughter was fully recovered she could receive no one.

These precautions were needless. It was not a time when people received or made visits. The Revolution was galloping like a fever, the crisis of delirium was at hand.

The two miserable châtelaines of Olonde overcome by the domestic tragedy of which their dwelling was the theater, knew absolutely nothing of the political tragedy which was about to have France for stage.

Mme. de Ferjol talked of going to mass. In a moment there would be none for her to attend, nor one of those altars to kneel at which are the columns where every broken heart should lean.

X

WHEN Mme. de Ferjol appeared at mass in one of the parishes adjacent to Olonde, she did not cause as much of a sensation as she might have caused at another time. The rumor of the Revolution dominated everything, and even in Normandy, where common-sense is a birthright, it brought with it enthusiasm or fright; it turned all heads, preparatory perhaps to amputating them. As a consequence Mme. de Ferjol, whose elopement had been well-nigh forgotten, created little attention. Her château, which for years had dozed on the side of the highway where its three turrets were planted, opened its eyes, or

The Story Without a Name

rather its shutters, again, and the white headdress of Agathe was seen in the windows once more. The wooden shutters that barricaded the gateway disappeared, and to the infrequent passers the little details of life seemed to have noiselessly returned to the castle that had been dead. But the fact that Mme. de Ferjol occupied it was practically as unnoticed as her arrival. The solitude was undisturbed. She lived in that tête-à-tête with her daughter which was to be the latter's life, and which now no other presence than that of Agathe disturbed.

There is no marriage possible for Las-thénie, the mother often reflected. For how could she say to a man who might love her enough to marry her, and who in marrying her would believe her to be a young girl—how could she say that

The Story Without a Name

Lasthénie was a widow, and a widow incapable of emerging from the abjection of her widowhood? How was she to confide the dishonor of her daughter to the man who came to ask her hand? Honesty, loyalty, religion, every one of the divine atoms which went to the making of that woman, rose in rebellion at the thought; and of all the thoughts that crucified her, that one was not the least poignant. In her present prostration and languor, Lasthénie was necessarily incompetent to inspire any other sentiment than that of pity; but she was young, and what powerful elixirs there are in youth! what wonderful resources it possesses! Only, under penalty of infamy, there is no recourse against the necessity of telling the truth. And it was that knowledge of infamy which bound the existence and the destiny of

The Story Without a Name

the mother to the destiny and existence of the child, condemning them in their isolation to live face to face, alienated forever. The supposition that some day a man might love the girl was but a dream, one, however, which added a grief of its own to those sorrows which fate had already inflicted. During the terrible night which I have related Mme. de Ferjol had searched in vain in her daughter's face for a single sign of love. There had been none, there was to be none; Lasthénie was destined to die without loving or being loved. Her lost beauty she never recovered, and although when Agathe returned from her pilgrimage Mme. de Ferjol told her that the girl was better, and so told her perhaps because she hoped such was the case rather than believed it, yet, as the days and months

The Story Without a Name

passed over the girl's once charming head, and bowed it more and more, hope went and belief as well. Anyone who had known the circumstances would have said that the accouchement, of which she might have died and did not die, had caused some rupture of the spinal column, for afterwards her back was bent. And when she and her mother appeared in church, merely at sight of them it was understood that Mme. de Ferjol would receive no one, the better to care for her daughter's health. The general opinion was that the girl she dragged with her she would not drag long.

She might have done so, however, had not the Revolution in its sacrilegious apogee suddenly closed the church's door.

There was no reason now to hide Las-

The Story Without a Name

thénie from the physicians, and at Mme. de Ferjol's request several of them came to Olonde, but in the girl, feeble now in mind as in body, they detected merely one of those marasms of which the cause is impenetrable. Alone in the universe Mme. de Ferjol knew that cause. It was the girl's sin, she told herself, and it was of that she would die. Jansenist as she was, she had a firmer belief in God's justice than in his pity; and, to her thinking, it was divine justice that had bent that delicious form which the arms of a man had embraced. And convinced that the girl would not escape the punishment of her sin, Mme. de Ferjol watched her falling day by day, deeper into the mysterious disease that was killing her, as one watches the remnants of a demolished palace turn into dust. In spite of the girl's conduct,

The Story Without a Name

in spite of her refusal to acknowledge her guilt, in spite of the severity of her own creed, in spite, in fact, of everything, Mme. de Ferjol suffered in the suffering of her daughter; only she did not express that sympathy to Lasthénie, who for that matter was no longer capable of understanding even what sympathy was. The malady from which she suffered, and which disconcerted the physicians so well, that, after suggesting moxas, they declared it incurable, this malady was not of the body alone, but of the soul. It possessed her entirely. Her reason, which had brushed very close to idiocy, turned the little light that was left to it toward the shadows of lunacy. But her silence was her safeguard. She was dying, as she had lived, without speaking. All day she would sit, speechless, unoccupied,

The Story Without a Name

motionless, her head against the wall, without a word even for Agathe, who drowned herself in tears, and bemoaned the absence of that resource on which she had counted, a priest to exorcise her darling. For the priests had fled, the Revolution was at its height, a thing which was known at Olonde, only because there was no priest to exorcise Lasthénie. The fact in itself is unique. There, in that little Château d'Olonde, which the Revolution spared, and which with its three turrets still endures, were three women unhappy enough, in the nest of misery in which they crouched, to forget everything which did not concern them. While the blood of scaffolds inundated France, the three martyrs of an ill-fated life saw only that which flowed from their hearts.

It was during this forgetfulness of the
[196]

The Story Without a Name

forgotten Revolution that Lasthénie succumbed, carrying with her to the tomb her secret—*what Mme. de Ferjol thought was her secret*. There had been nothing to warn anyone that the end was so near. She was not different that day from the day previous and the days before that. Mme. de Ferjol and Agathe had not noticed in her face, which had been despairfully pale so long, nor in the expression of her eyes, nor yet in the weakness of her body, anything to make them think she was about to die.

As a rule there was no need to watch her. They left her, her head against the wall of the room which she had chosen, and came and went through that house in which two things were invariable, Mme. de Ferjol praying, and Agathe weeping, each in a corner. On that day

The Story Without a Name

they found her exactly as they had left her, in the same place, her head against the wall, her eyes wide open—but dead, her soul departed, that poor soul of hers which was hardly a soul at all. At that spectacle Agathe threw herself at the knees of her darling, embracing them passionately, and rolling on them, as she sobbed, her old grief-stricken head. But Mme. de Ferjol, who contained her emotion better, slipped her hand under the breast of her whom she had often called by a name that fitted her well, “little girl,” in order to discover whether the heart that had beaten had ceased to beat, and there felt something.

“Blood, Agathe!”

Her voice was horrible as she spoke. On her fingers were a few drops. Agathe tore herself from the knees she was embracing, and together they

The Story Without a Name

opened the waist. Horror seized them. Lasthénie had killed herself, slowly, little by little, each day a fraction more, with pins.

They drew out eighteen stuck in the region of the heart.

XI

TWENTY-FIVE years later Mme. de Ferjol, who had survived her daughter, and whom, as she said of herself, nothing could kill, was dining one evening with the Count de Lude, a relative of hers, and parenthetically one of the most charming hosts in St. Sauveur, where, as may be remembered, there had been plenty of dancing before the Revolution, and where she herself had danced with the white officer, her black angel who put her in mourning for the rest of her life. At that time dancing had ceased. *Autre temps, autre mœurs!* But dining had not. In place of contredances were large repasts. It was at one of these that Mme. de Ferjol assisted.

The Story Without a Name

Doubly aged by grief and by years, severer in piety than ever, almost a saint—if a pitiless saint there can be—it was surprising enough to find her amid the gaiety of a dinner-table. She was there, however. Endowed, as has been seen, with an unusual strength of character, inimical to any form of affectation, she had re-entered the world to which she belonged—long after the death of her daughter, it is true—but she had re-entered it, and had renewed her relations with a simplicity and sobriety of her own. Buried in her heart was the memory of the unforgettable secret which her daughter had died without revealing, and that memory was as a cancer to her; she hid it, she gave no sign, but it gnawed ceaselessly at her breast. No one had ever suspected what she knew of her daughter's life,

The Story Without a Name

but what made her suffer most was not what she knew, but what she did not know. Was she ever to know? She had no hope of it. Meanwhile, inwardly despairful, outwardly composed, she continued to live. She was but a ruin, but a ruin like the Coliseum; one that had its grandeur and its majesty.

At the end of the table where she sat there was less laughter and loud talking than at the other. Her seriousness commanded respect. The dinner itself was lively and agreeable, though the guests were terribly mixed. It offered in epitome a portrait of society such as the Revolution and the Empire had made it, a reunion, as the Count de Lude put it, of the three classes. The clergy was represented, the nobility, and the third estate. Between the Marquise de Limorre, an aristocrat to her finger-tips,

The Story Without a Name

and the Marquis de Pont-l'Abbé, whose title was as old as the hills, was a Norman peasant, a superb-looking fellow, be it said, who had got rid of his native uncouthness and had become an authentic Parisian bourgeois. And there, between the marquis and the marquise, the bourgeois spread a white waistcoat, like a silver escutcheon between its two supports; of which one, the marquise, was the unicorn, and the other, the marquis, the greyhound. Each year he came to St. Sauveur on a vacation, for he enjoyed the leisure of wealth; wealth which he would willingly have lost solely for the pleasure of regaining it. He was bored. He had a special complaint, the homesickness of the retired merchant.

In trade he had been a grocer, but a grocer of the highest class. He had been a grocer to His Majesty Napoleon,

The Story Without a Name

Emperor and King, in the fairest days of the latter's glory, and his shop, which disappeared with the others on the Place du Carrousel, stared for ten years without blinking straight into the eyes of the Tuileries—which has gone too. All imperial grocer that he was, he had neither the name nor the appearance of a tradesman. He had a name that would have suited a general—Bataille. In appearance Providence had made him one of the handsomest men of an epoch, when almost every man was superb, men whom David and Géricault have painted, perhaps for our humiliation. Among the cooks he was known as the good-looking grocer of the Carrousel. His name fitted his looks. His bearing was so military that at night, with his claque and cloak he surprised the sentinels into saluting him, as they salute a general;

The Story Without a Name

and that salute he returned like a general, with a gravity and a pompousness which delighted his friends. For a moment he was really the general, but one who rebecame a grocer at once. He had no brains, he had not an idea in his head, a fact which at the age of sixty perfectly explained his excellent health. But he was shrewd, as a Norman ever is. The fall of the Empire did not injure him; he abdicated from his shop as Napoleon from the Empire, only, unlike the latter, there was no return from Elba. He died very peacefully in 1830 of cholera.

Such was the individual whom chance and revolutions had placed at the dinner-table of the Count de Lude, in front of Mme. de Ferjol. On that day, in honor of his host, he wore his finest apparel, a blue coat with gold buttons,

The Story Without a Name

white knee-breeches, silk stockings, and high-heeled shoes. He had been always aware of his good looks, and his good looks were not impaired by his tailor; he was relatively still young, strong, supple, and fair with that fairness that recalls the Scandinavian origin of the Normans, but which was apparent not in his hair, which was white as the wing of an albatross, but in his skin and its fresh coloring. His style was neither good nor bad; he had none. Where would he have got any? from the cooks to whom he had sold ponies of brandy every morning? In this respect his ignorance was like that of M. de Corbière, who put his tobacco-spotted handkerchief on the King's desk. Bataille would not have put his, a silk one, scented at that, on the Count de Lude's table, but he had put his snuff-box there,

The Story Without a Name

a very handsome one, with a miniature on it of his son, a horrid little beast, who did not in the least resemble his father, and whom his father affectionately entitled Battalson.

It was in connection with this snuff-box, passed to one of the guests who had asked to examine the miniature, that the Marquis de Pont-l'Abbé caught sight of an emerald on the little finger of the hand extended before him.

“See here, Bataille,” he exclaimed; “you must be deuced vain to wear a ring of such beauty and value. Where in the world did you get such a marvel?”

Bataille laughed. “You could never guess. Fifty thousand crowns to twenty-five louis that you can’t.”

“What nonsense!” Pont-l’Abbé incredulously retorted.

The Story Without a Name

“Try and guess, then,” answered Bataille.

The old marquis reflected for a moment, and sought, but probably did not find, a supposition decent enough to hazard before such a redoubtable devotee as Mme. de Ferjol, who, in the eternal gnawing of the cancer which was eating her heart, paid no attention whatever.

“Well,” said Bataille, at last, “I took it from a robber. I gave him the change for his coin. The robber was robbed. It was odd enough. Would you like to hear how it happened?”

“Yes,” answered the Count de Lude; “tell us the story; it will help us on with the Chambertin.”

XII

“IT runs rather far back,” said Bataille, “for at that time the Emperor was not yet Emperor, nor was I his grocer.”

The Empire was so great that it made even grocers proud, and Bataille spoke with an air of imperial pride.

“Barras then was chief; under him, at the head of the police, was Fouché, who, as you know, subsequently became minister of justice, but in those days, what with the Jacobins and Chouans, he had all he could attend to. The police he commanded was not for civil purposes, but political; the government ranked ahead of Paris. None of you

The Story Without a Name

gentlemen who were then in the provinces or abroad can fancy what Paris was the day after the Revolution. It had ceased to be a capital; it was not even a city, it was a cavern. Except in the neighborhood of the Palais Royal not a street lamp was to be seen. The Revolution had turned them into gibbets. The darkness swarmed with cut-throats; there was danger everywhere. Unless you were armed to the teeth you were safe only at home. And even then! However—

“I lived at that time on the corner of the Rue de Sèvres, in a shop which, when I pass it, I always look at now. The iron bars on the windows have an interest for me. I will tell you why. One night when I had shut up early, and had gone to sleep in a room over the shop, I was awakened by a curious

The Story Without a Name

sound. It was a noise like that of sawing, and I said to myself, 'There are thieves downstairs.' I called my assistant, who slept in the loft, and we went down on tip-toe. I was right; it was thieves. They were sawing the shutter, and when we got there, they had made a hole in it about twice the size of the inside of a hat. Through that hole a hand was stretched; it had seized one of the bars and was trying to loosen it. The hand alone was visible; the man to whom it belonged was behind the shutter, and there were others with him, for I heard them whispering together. An idea struck me. I mentioned it to my assistant, a young fellow from here, from Benneville, who was sturdy as an oak, and not awkward either, as you shall see. He understood me at once, jumped at the hand, and grasped it with

The Story Without a Name

both his own with a grip that was like a vise for that hand, which I then bound firmly to the bar with a cord that I had taken from the counter.

“‘You won’t work any more, my beauty,’ I said laughingly. The bandit was secure enough, and I chuckled beforehand at the face he would pull when he saw me the next morning. We then went upstairs again, I to my bed, my assistant to the loft. But I did not sleep very well. I kept listening in spite of myself. Presently I thought I heard the fall of departing steps. I was afraid to look out; the brigands might have fired in my face, and I did not want to be disfigured.”

At this Bataille smiled with an air of vanity, and showed his white teeth.

“Besides, I knew that on the morrow I should have my revenge, and that

The Story Without a Name

sweet thought lulled me to sleep."

The grocer had succeeded in interesting the well-bred aristocrats who surrounded him; they looked at him, smiling no longer at his fine head, the beauty of which they envied perhaps, nor even at his earrings, which he had worn since boyhood, and which, in giving him the air of an old postilion, revenged them for his good looks.

"But on the morrow," he continued, "there was another tune to sing. You can understand, gentlemen, that I was up early, and that when I got into the shop my first look was for that devil of a hand. I knew very well that it was tied fast, that it could not budge; I had bound it that way. But at the first glance I almost tumbled over with astonishment; instead of being swollen, puffed, purple, black even, as I had ex-

The Story Without a Name

pected it would be because of the strangulation of the cord with which I had tied it, and which I bound so tight that it cut the flesh—instead of that it was as colorless as though not a drop of blood had circulated in it. It seemed exhausted, white and limp as the hand of a woman. I ran to the door, and, opening it, I looked. Instead of a man, there was a pool of blood—”

Bataille was not eloquent. In his childhood he had been a shepherd, and in talking he had eccentricities of speech which I have suppressed. But had he been eloquent, I give you my word he could not have produced a greater effect. His listeners had forgotten him, they were thinking of the robbers who had cut their accomplice's wrist and dragged him away.

“Brave fellows, all the same,” said de

The Story Without a Name

Lude, who was energetic, and who would have done as much himself.

“I went back to the shop,” Bataille continued, and for a while I looked at the hand, which had been sawn at the forearm, probably with the saw that had sawn the shutter. It was a curious hand, one, I can assure, that did not look like the hand of a bandit; and it was then that I noticed a ring. The stone had slipped around on the inside of the finger; and that stone, my lord marquis, is the emerald before you. It is too handsome for me, I admit. It is not every day that I wear it, and when I do, it is only with the idea that through some chance I may meet the person to whom it belonged, and learn who the robber was.”

Bataille had told his story, and he had buried under it the jests of the old

The Story Without a Name

marquis. He cut him out, as the English say. The guests—there were fully twenty at the dinner which the Count de Lude had called a reunion of three classes—the guests were all curious about the emerald; they asked to see it, and it passed from hand to hand. At last it reached the guest who sat at Mme. de Ferjol's left, the abbot of a monastery that had been built in the forest of Bric-quebec. It happened that, in passing through St. Sauveur, the Count de Lude had asked him to dinner, in honor of Mme. de Ferjol, the saint of the country; and he had placed him at table beside her.

Of the guests that were present this abbot, Father Augustin by name, and Mme. de Ferjol were the only ones who were indifferent to the emerald that was

The Story Without a Name

performing its little circular journey; and, without looking at it, Father Augustin accepted it from his neighbor, the Count de Kirkeville, and with the gravity of a man who, in spite of himself, is doing a frivolous thing he offered it to Mme. de Ferjol. But Mme. de Ferjol, graver even than he, did not take it; her eyes, however, haughtily inattentive, fell upon the emerald by chance, and at once, as though struck by a bullet, she first screamed, then fainted.

She had recognized her husband's ring, the one she had given to Lasthénie.

The astonishment of the guests equalled perhaps her own, but the respect which she commanded was so great that none of those who were present ever mentioned the incident. Concerning that sudden swoon of hers, which had

The Story Without a Name

every appearance of covering a drama, nothing was said.

On recovering she returned to Olonde and began looking again into the gaping cancer in her heart. There was a new crevice in it now; her daughter, the daughter of a de Ferjol, had loved a thief.

“Lord God!” she cried, “will this never end? Is this agony inexhaustible?”

With a tragic gesture she tore hair by handfuls from her hollowed temples, and threw herself, crucified as she was, before the crucifix.

Agathe, her servant in grief, now eighty-five years of age, and who, if one could live on grief, might readily live to be a hundred, entered the room where she lay, and with the voice of a specter murmured:

The Story Without a Name

“The Reverend Father Abbot of the
Trappe of Bricquebec begs to see your
ladyship.”

“Show him in.”

XIII

AS the prelate entered, Mme. de Ferjol rose to her feet. He bowed to her with manifest respect, but he seemed nervous, ill at ease. In the haste in which he hd come to Olonde, it was clear that he had a duty to perform.

Mme. de Ferjol motioned him to be seated, but he remained standing.

“Madame,” he began, at once, “I have brought you the ring which you recognized as your own, and I have come to tell you,” he added, solemnly, “the name of the man who lost it—with his hand.”

As he spoke he offered her the ring. But she did not take it. At the moment it was impossible for her to touch the

The Story Without a Name

jewel. It had been profaned, sullied, ten times over; and, moreover, it had come from the amputated hand of a thief. She trembled from head to foot.

“The name—” she stammered.

“Yes,” the prelate interrupted, “the name of the man who ruined your life, whom you must have often cursed, who in religion was known as Father Riculf, of the Holy Order of the Capuchins, and who, during Lent, lodged at your house twenty-five years ago.”

Mme. de Ferjol grew pale as a ghost; she felt her strength departing, but, summoning all her energy, she prepared to ask the question on which her whole life depended. Her dark eyes, beneath which Lasthénie had always lowered her own, were fixed on the prelate.

“Have you only that to tell me?” she asked.

The Story Without a Name

“I have everything to tell you,” he answered, “for he, on the cinders on which members of our order die, and on which, at peace with God, he died a few days ago, told me, in the last hour, with the crucifix at his lips, that he alone was guilty, and that your daughter was innocent of the sin.”

“It was I, then!” cried Mme. de Ferjol. In a lightning-flash her entire life unfolded. “It was I——!”

With incomparable dignity the prelate interrupted her again:

“It is not for me to judge you, madame. I am but the bearer of a message which must be grateful to a soul as pure as your own, that your daughter was innocent, that the guardian angel of her life was ever at her side, gazing at her with immaculate and immortal eyes.”

He stopped, astonished that no sign

The Story Without a Name

of joy was visible in the woman's face. The remorse that was there, remorse for having believed Lasthénie guilty, and of slowly and tragically killing her because of it, he did not understand.

"Father," she muttered, "the message comes too late. It was I that killed my child. The priest, in whose guilt I could never believe, did worse than that in taking her in his sacrilegious arms. But he did not kill, he sullied her; he left me to kill her, and kill her I did. By my daughter's death I consummated the crime which he began."

With that she lowered her head. She was self-condemned. The prelate saw that her heart was breaking, and he had that pity for her which she had not had for her daughter. He sat down and with divine charity again addressed her. He told her that her suffering was un-

The Story Without a Name

necessary, that she was the victim of an error of which it was impossible for her not to have been the victim; and then he told her all.

Concerning certain mysterious facts, science at that time possessed only superficial and inexact data. To-day, if we know more, it is merely that they exist.

Like Lady Macbeth, Lasthénie had been a somnambulist. It may be that Mme. de Ferjol had never read Shakespeare.

In one of her accesses, which were so infrequent that neither her mother nor Agathe was aware of them, Lasthénie had left her room and sat on the great stairway where so many of her waking hours had been passed; there Riculf discovered her, and, tempted by the demon of solitary nights, accomplished the

The Story Without a Name

crime, of which the unfortunate girl, in the ignorance of sleep, had been wholly unconscious. But why, the crime accomplished, had he taken the ring? Was he already the thief which he afterwards became? Who shall say? In the nature of man there are mysteries which as yet are unexplained. Somnambulists sometimes make presents, though that proves nothing. For my part I knew one—a young girl—who gave a ring to a man guilty of the same crime as Riculf, and who afterwards, voluntarily, though with an unconquerable dread, married the horrible betrothed of her sleep.

Mme. de Ferjol had never heard of somnambulism. What the prelate said stupefied her; she was medusa'd by the malignity of the man who had entered her life and her daughter's like a vam-

The Story Without a Name

pire, and who, falling from the monstrous to the ignominious, had sunk to the pettiness of theft. It was here that the blue blood she had in her revolted, and the thought of the theft became more insupportable than the crime. For the moment she hesitated to believe in that final turpitude which sullied her daughter twice over. But the prelate assured her that the amputated hand of the robber had really been that of Riculf, who, as it appeared, had become one of the foremost bandits of the day. When Agathe met him on the stairway that had been the spectator of his crime he was on his way to every vice. They were all of them cooking then in the pot in which the Revolution bubbled over on the world. It was an hour when the Church herself had need of persecution and the revivifying blood of

The Story Without a Name

martyrs. Years later Riculf had come one evening to the monastery of Bric-quebec. His despair was great; his repentance such as only visits the strong.

“If you drive me away,” he said to the abbot, “you send me back to the hell from which I come.”

“I and my brethren,” the prelate continued, “remembered that La Trappe is the refuge of criminals unpunished by men, and in the name of celestial charity we opened our door to him and shut it against the justice of the world. Father Riculf was one of those who are excessive in all things. He endured for years among us in the most expiating penitence.”

“And died like a saint, I suppose,” Mme. de Ferjol indignantly interjected.

But in a moment she was calmer, and less insultingly she asked:

The Story Without a Name

“Father, do you think that such a man can enter heaven?”

Solemnly the benignant prelate answered: “For years he lived, as he died, in that hope.”

“If he is in heaven, I do not want to be there with him,” exclaimed Mme. de Ferjol, with a blind obstinacy that fully expressed her indignant rage.

But the abbot, though deeply wounded, was too charitable to forsake the pitiless. He returned more than once to Olonde, endeavoring as best he might to lead her back to more Christian sentiments.

In this he failed. She resisted his persuasions. In the knowledge that her child was innocent, a hatred of the Capuchin who had sullied her enveloped her and confiscated to its own profit the higher sentiments of her creed. God,

The Story Without a Name

it may be, had forgiven, but she could not. Hatred possessed her wholly. The prelate tried to soften her, and, with that emollient oil which the good Samaritan used on him who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, he endeavored to soothe the ulcer that ravaged in her heart. But the effort was vain. Mme. de Ferjol was inflexible. The memory of hospitality violated by a priest whom she called a Judas, heightened her hate, and from it —this is a thing which every passionate nature will appreciate—a horrible desire came, a curiosity which she felt she must satisfy.

Mme. de Ferjol was well informed in all religious observances. She knew that the Trappists are buried without a coffin, that they remain exposed, the face unveiled, in an open grave, and that over

The Story Without a Name

the body each day a spadeful of earth is thrown until it is covered by that six feet of clay which suffices to us all. Her desire was to see once again the abhorred Riculf, to gorge her eyes on the spectacle of his corpse. Hatred is like love; it must see.

He died, she reflected, but recently. The face of the elect is not like that of other men. When their tomb is opened their calm yet radiant expression shows that they died in the odor of sanctity. I will see if this scoundrel, who may have duped the abbot with his repentance, as he duped me with his holiness, has the face of the elect.

One day, without a word to Agathe, she went to Bricquebec. Women are not allowed within the walls of a Trappist monastery save on certain festivals, and then only in the church; but the

The Story Without a Name

cemetery, situated always in an adjacent field is open to everyone. It was there that Mme. de Ferjol went.

What she sought was easily found. There was no one in the cemetery, and amid the long grass she discovered a recent grave, which she knew must be that of Riculf. She approached the edge and looked down. In her eyes was that expression which hatred shares with love, a longing to devour. The corpse was there. In spite of the handfuls of earth strewn on it, the face of a man was still visible, and, in spite of years, in spite of the beard that had grown white, in spite of the sightless eyes which worms were eating, she recognized it at once; and the worms she envied; she would have liked to have been one of them. The audacious mouth, which had startled her before, and on which God with his own

The Story Without a Name

hand had placed a warning, she recognized as well. Standing beside the grave, forgetful of the time that passed, her eyes sank into the hated mouth that was rotting there, as the sun sinks in the horizon.

The sun was behind her, and her shadow, lengthened by it, fell into the tomb, her black gown reddened by its rays. Suddenly another shadow fell beside her own, and a hand rested on her arm. She trembled and turned.

It was the abbot.

“You?” he said, with less astonishment than gravity—“you, madame?”

“Yes,” she answered, with a voice that trembled too; “I wanted to slake my hate.”

“Madame,” the prelate interrupted, “you are a Christian but what you say is unchristianlike. To stare at the dead

The Story Without a Name

with eyes of hate is profanation, and to the dead respect is due."

"To him, never!" she cried. "A moment ago I was about to get down into his grave and trample him under my feet."

"Poor woman!" the prelate murmured to himself, "she will die unrepentant of feelings that are too absolute for this life."

And, for that matter, she did die shortly after, in that sublime impotence which the world may admire, but which we cannot.



304
115
125
125

PQ 2189 .B32 H512
The story without a name,
Stanford University Libraries

C.1



3 6105 039 019 596

PQ
218
.B3
H512
1919

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA
94305

